



# LAWN TENNIS



*Photo]*

*[R. J. Mackenzie, Eastbourne*

# LAWN TENNIS

THE WORLD-GAME OF TO-DAY

BY

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"LAWN TENNIS HINTS," "LAWN TENNIS OF TO-DAY," ETC.

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TO  
B. G. B.



# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	xi
I. THE WORLD-GAME OF TO-DAY . . . . .	1
II. STYLE . . . . .	19
III. GRIPS . . . . .	25
IV. GROUND STROKES . . . . .	31
V. THE VOLLEY AND THE SMASH . . . . .	45
VI. VOLLEYING. BY S. N. DOUST . . . . .	55
VII. SERVICE . . . . .	63
VIII. SINGLES . . . . .	75
IX. DOUBLES . . . . .	89
X. MIXED DOUBLES . . . . .	115
XI. TOURNAMENTS . . . . .	123
XII. TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT . . . . .	135
XIII. HANDICAPS AND HANDICAPPING . . . . .	169
XIV. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GAME . . . . .	197
XV. SOME VEXED QUESTIONS . . . . .	209
XVI. THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG WAY . . . . .	231
INDEX . . . . .	265



# ILLUSTRATIONS

PLATE NO.		CHAP.
	F. R. Burrow . . . . . <i>Frontispiece</i>	
I.	B. I. C. Norton. Forehand drive down line : finish . . .	IV
II.	„ Forehand cross-court drive : finish . . .	
III.	A. H. Lowe. Forehand drive : swinging forward to the ball	
IV.	C. E. von Braun. Forehand top-spin drive : forward swing	
V.	„ Forehand top-spin drive : finish . . .	
VI.	F. G. Lowe. Position for backhand drive . . .	
VII.	„ Finish of cross-court backhand drive . . .	
VIII.	„ Backhand "sliced" drive down side-line, made on the run : finish . . .	
IX.	B. I. C. Norton. Backhand drive : just after the ball has been struck . . .	
X.	„ Finish of cross-court backhand drive . . .	
XI.	„ Finish of backhand drive down side-line . . .	
XII.	„ Backhand drive taken on the run : just before impact . . .	
XIII.	Mrs. Larcombe. Backhand cross-court shot off ground, with short swing : just before impact . . .	
XIV.	„ Backhand cross-court shot off ground, with short swing : finish . . .	
XV.	S. N. Doust. Backhand cross-court return of service . . .	
XVI.	„ Forehand cross-court return of service : finish	
XVII.	„ Forehand cross-court volley : just after hitting the ball . . .	
XVIII.	„ Forehand cross-court volley : finish of stroke . . .	
XIX.	„ Backhand cross-court volley : ball struck . . .	
XX.	„ Backhand cross-court volley : half-through . . .	
XXI.	„ Backhand cross-court volley : finish . . .	
XXII.	B. I. C. Norton. Backhand shoulder-high volley . . .	
XXIII.	Miss Ryan. Backhand cross volley, made on the run . . .	
XXIV.	S. N. Doust. Backhand "push" volley . . .	
XXV.	„ Low volley, forehand . . .	
XXVI.	„ Backhand low volley, defensive . . .	
XXVII.	B. I. C. Norton. Low volley, forehand . . .	
XXVIII.	„ Low volley, backhand . . .	
XXIX.	„ Low volley, forehand . . .	
XXX.	Mrs. Larcombe. Low backhand volley . . .	
XXXI.	R. Lycett. Smash from close to net. The player has had to jump to reach the ball . . .	
XXXII.	„ Smash, taken on the run . . .	
XXXIII.	„ Coming forward to the smash . . .	
XXXIV.	„ The smash : just after impact . . .	

for two reasons : first, that the game itself is a game which changes and develops ; secondly, that the numbers of those who want to play it are continually increasing, not only in this country but all over the world.

Last year, for example, a "Public Parks Players' Association" was founded in this country, with a membership estimated at half a million players. Ninety per cent. of these players have, as yet, pretty nearly everything to learn about the game and how to play it. They look on lawn tennis, at present, merely as a recreation ; and I would not for a moment suggest that this is not a right view, so far as it goes. But it is a limited view. There is more in the game than merely knocking a ball over (or into) a net. The keener spirits very soon discover this for themselves ; but they find themselves up against the stumbling-block that there is nobody to teach them what to do or why to do it. Professional teachers of lawn tennis are few, and their time is more than fully taken up. Consequently, there is a demand for books about the game, and books which contain the latest information and deal with the newest artifices of play. I cannot pretend that the following pages contain all that there is to be said about lawn tennis and the way to play it ; but I hope that even those who have advanced a considerable distance beyond the "novice" stage may derive benefit, and possibly learn something new, from reading it.

I have been fortunate in obtaining some very good "action-photographs" to illustrate this book, as well as some "posed" photographs to accompany the section which endeavours to show girls and women beginners the Right and the Wrong way of making their shots. This section is the only portion of the text which has appeared in print before, having been published in 1921

## INTRODUCTION

xiii

in *The Woman's Pictorial*, to the Editor of which paper I am indebted for permission to republish the photographs of Mrs. Larcombe, taken by the Hana Studios, which illustrate it. Nearly all the "action-photographs" in the main body of the book (about a dozen of which were first published in *Country Life*) were taken by *The Motor Owner*, and the remainder by Capt. Oswald Jackson, to whom I tender my sincere thanks for allowing me to use them.

The majority of the photographs show the methods and strokes of R. Lycett, S. N. Doust (who has also contributed a chapter on Volleying), and B. I. C. Norton. There could be no better model for aspiring volleyers to study than the two first of these; while Norton is one of the best and most interesting players of the rising generation—an "all-rounder" whose shots, while mainly orthodox, are instinct with the fire of youth, and serve admirably to illustrate the game as it is played to-day.

F. R. BURROW.





# LAWN TENNIS



# **THE WORLD-GAME OF TO-DAY**



## CHAPTER I

### THE WORLD-GAME OF TO-DAY

ENGLISHMEN have spread their games all over the world. An adventurous and colonising race, they have gone into the ends of the earth, and wherever they have gone they have taken their games with them. That their keenness upon games has often caused the natives of the countries in which they have settled to brand them as "mad" has never worried them at all. They have gone on with their cricket and their football, their golf and their lawn tennis. There can be but few countries where two or three at least of these games are not played and enjoyed by Englishmen just as much as when they are at home. All these games, therefore, may be termed "world-wide"; but there is one very important particular in which lawn tennis differs from all the others. That difference lies in the universality of its appeal. The other games are played abroad by Englishmen; but the natives of the countries where Englishmen play them seldom adopt or try to play these games themselves; or, if they do adopt them, attain any real proficiency in them. But lawn tennis has undoubtedly a great attraction for the men and women of other races as a game to play and not merely to watch, and each succeeding year shows that it is a game which they can learn to play every bit as well as their teachers. For they are, fortunately, not content to play it on their own courts and in their own countries;

but, as soon as they can, the best of them come to England, the home of the game, to measure their strength in the Championships at Wimbledon against a field consisting not only of the best English players, but of the players of other nations equally emulous. Convincing evidence of this truth may be found in the fact that, out of a hundred and twenty-eight players in the Men's Singles Championship at Wimbledon in 1921 (at least two-thirds of whom were Englishmen), the last sixteen left in were made up of a Japanese, a Frenchman, a Spaniard, a Dutchman, an American, an Indian, an Irishman, two South Africans, an Anglo-Indian, a Canadian, and only five Englishmen. And, apart from these sixteen survivors of the original entry, native competitors from Belgium, Switzerland, and China had fallen by the way. Moreover, Australia—one of the greatest of lawn-tennis-playing countries—was not represented, for the first time for many years; and German and Austrian players, both of which nationalities have in the past sent fine players to Wimbledon, were still under the ban of exclusion. Even as I am writing this, I note that players from Argentina, Chili, Paraguay, and Uruguay are fighting out a South American Championship of their own! Could there be better proof that lawn tennis is the world-game of to-day? No other game can, I think, show such cosmopolitanism of appeal; none, I am sure, such catholicity of adoption.

And one of the results of the adoption of the game by men of other nationalities is that no home player has won the Men's Singles Championship for eleven years; whereas in the first twenty-three years in which the Championship was played it was only won once by any but a home player. This is, very naturally, interpreted as a sign of the decadence of English players by

the majority of people; but the real reason is, not that the average merit of English play has deteriorated, but that the average merit of the players of other countries has improved. Above the average rise the few who have a genius for the game: of these there is undoubtedly a dearth among home players at the present time, all the more noticeable because, quite naturally, other countries are producing outstanding players. And they produce them mainly because their players begin to play at a much earlier age than ours do. No first-class home player in the whole history of the game was a "youthful prodigy," good enough to win a championship before he was twenty years old; because, in the past, most of the best home players have been men who never even began to play lawn tennis till they had passed that age, and even then only "picked up" the game in a haphazard way. But in America, Australia, France, and many other countries, boys play lawn tennis while still at school, and not only play it but *learn* it. They have had, up to the present time, at the very least five or six years' start of the English boy. But, so far as mere playing is concerned, there are signs that this advantage will not always be theirs. In 1921 two hundred and twelve English school-boys competed at Queen's Club in the Public Schools' Tournament, and nearly a hundred and fifty in the Lawn Tennis Association's Junior Championship at Surbiton. Yet owing to the majority of these boys being entirely untaught, their game was for the most part featureless and unenterprising; if they had been put against an equal number of American, or even French, boys of similar ages, they would have done well if one out of ten of them had won his match; and then it would have been owing to determination not to be beaten rather than to any



superiority of stroke production. Still, it is something gained that they should be playing at all. When the time comes, as come it will, that boys at school get the instruction in playing lawn tennis without which they cannot hope to lift themselves out of the ruck, and find courts provided for their play on which they can develop freedom and speed of stroke, just so surely will some of them find themselves helping to bring back to this country its fair share in the honours of the game. But never, I hope, an unquestioned and unquestionable supremacy; for the supremacy of one country is not good for the development of the game. All recent developments in play have been made by players of other countries than this; and that the game has been improved by those developments few would deny. They, first, learnt from us; the pupil became as good as, and then better than, his teacher; now, in our turn, we must learn from them.

What is there about lawn tennis which makes it so peculiarly attractive? What has caused a game which was invented less than fifty years ago to develop into one which numbers amongst its adherents players of nearly all the nationalities of the world? It is played in the open air—but so are many other games. It possesses all the delights conferred by the spirit of competition—so do other games. It can be played, and played well, both by men and women—here it begins to differentiate itself from many games. It only requires a small piece of ground to play it on, and it can be played in any odd hour or half-hour of daylight: in these two respects it gains a big advantage over golf and cricket respectively, the two other most widely-spread games. It gives equal pleasure to the first-class player and the novice. Its rules are simple. It is not, as games go,

expensive. In its higher manifestations it is extremely strenuous; among its less ambitious adherents it may be merely a gentle and pleasant exercise. It is almost as good a game to watch as it is to play.

All these attributes make for the popularity of lawn tennis; but I believe the chief reason why it has made, and will continue to make, such an universal appeal, is that no other game affords so much scope for the muscular activity both of the young athlete and of the maturer business man; and that it provides first-rate physical exercise for people of both sexes, most ages, and all ranks, at little expense of either time or money. In all civilised communities games play an important part in the national life, because "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." If the business man and the professional man are to keep their mental activities in good order—and unless they do so they are unlikely to be successful in their business or their profession—they recognise the necessity of physical activities to counteract the bodily inertia engendered by their work. Lawn tennis provides just the kind of physical activity they need. It keeps them "fit." And it will keep them fit for a very great many years. It is by no means an uncommon thing to find "veterans" of well over sixty, and in some cases over seventy, competing in the Veterans' Championship at Eastbourne. They may not be very great players; but the point is that they are still playing the game long after most men of their age have ceased to take any more active exercise than that involved in playing golf. Their case is only cited to show that the game can be played up to a very late period in life; but apart altogether from them, some of the very best players in this country at the present day have either passed their fiftieth milestone or are only

just short of it. Take A. W. Gore, for example; three times winner of the Singles Championship, and the last Englishman to win it, thirteen years ago. At the age of twelve (he was a very exceptionally early beginner) he was good enough to win a prize in open competition. He first played at Wimbledon in the Championships of 1888, and he was still playing there, *for the thirtieth time*, last summer! But for the War, Gore might have been playing in his thirty-fifth Championship this year! He is, of course, an exceptional instance of longevity (in a lawn-tennis sense) among players of the first rank; but there are scores, and probably hundreds, of players over fifty whose skill, plus their experience, is still good enough to allow them to beat men of half their age. So long, indeed, do men go on playing, and playing well, that when it was decided a year or two ago to raise the age when a man might become qualified to play in the Veterans' Championship from forty to forty-five years, it was a matter of serious consideration whether it should not be put up to fifty right away, instead of waiting till the numbers of competitors over forty-five became as overwhelming as they had previously been when the qualifying age was forty!

But though I have said quite enough to show that what would be a prohibitive age at most games is no bar to a player of lawn tennis, it would create a wholly wrong impression if the reader should imagine that lawn tennis is an "old man's game." On the contrary it is, first and foremost, a game for youth. And to reach the top of the tree youth will, in the future, be a far more important factor than it was until a few years ago. For the game, as it is played to-day, among first-class players, is a very greatly faster game than it has ever been before. Each year sees a decline in the long

“angling for position,” which was the main characteristic of the game as it was played for the first thirty years or so of its existence. The average length of a rally between two good players in the earlier days of the game may very well have been nine or ten strokes; to-day I should doubt if it exceeds half that number in singles, and still fewer in doubles. So strong (and so successful) have the attractions of “going for a winner” proved.

The watchword of the modern player is Speed—speed of foot and speed of stroke. Here is where Youth, naturally, comes into its own. But that the very best players of to-day should nearly all be quite young is not in itself the only reason why the game is so much faster, though it is a contributory cause. Another potent reason—strange as it may seem—is the climate of this country. If the game had never spread beyond England, the “speeding-up” of the game would probably never have taken place. The English climate favours the growth of grass, and grass provides the “lawn” on which the game, from the day of its birth, has been played in this country. But other countries are not so fortunate—though I am not sure that I ought not really to say “are more fortunate.” Few of them have the grass that we have; outside England the grass court is the exception and the “hard” court—made of rubble, or sand, or clay, or gravel, or wood, or half a dozen different substitutes for grass—is the rule. Now, for mere pleasantness to the sight and to the tread, the grass court beats the hard court every time; and a really first-rate grass court is the ideal surface on which to play. But first-rate grass courts are hard to make, and harder still to keep. They wear into patches with a summer’s play, and become bumpy and

“untrue.” And when the few first-rate grass courts are left out of the calculation, the ordinary grass court, though it may be moderately good when dry, is apt to become a mere mud-patch when played upon in wet weather. On wet courts the ball cannot rise: even dry grass courts are often so uneven that it is impossible to tell with certainty what the ball will do after it pitches. Consequently, as most of the lawn tennis in this country has always been played on grass courts, and on grass courts with an untrue surface, the necessity for “watching the ball” has always been paramount. It has scarcely ever been possible to hit confidently and quickly at the ball, because there was so much uncertainty as to whether any two consecutive balls would rise to the same height and in the same line of flight after pitching. For this reason the game has always been slower, taken as a whole, in England than in countries which use “hard” courts, on which the ball has a practically uniform bound, and can therefore be played at in full confidence of what it will do after it pitches. This confidence engenders speed of hitting, because the player on a hard court is not obliged to wait and see what the ball is going to do. The average English player’s style (just because he *is* obliged to wait and see) is cramped; he has little of the freedom of swing and of stroke which is the chief characteristic of the continental and overseas player. And a fast game is not to be obtained by a player with a cramped style. That this fact has been driven well home is evident from the large number of hard courts which are now being made in this country. Apart altogether from play being possible on hard courts nearly all the year round, and greater facilities for continuous practice thus provided, they are invaluable for teaching the

young player from the very start of his career to play with a free style and with the speed which only a free style can give in full. Grass courts are not in the least likely to disappear altogether, because they are pleasant to play on and do not cost so much, either in making or upkeep, as hard courts; but those who continue to play on any grass courts except the best must continue also to sacrifice the full freedom of stroke which the hard court confers on its devotees.

Lawn tennis, then, is a game which is suitable for players of all ages, and can be played on a variety of surfaces. The favour in which it is held is therefore not to be wondered at, and that its popularity is increasing enormously every year is fairly obvious from the numbers of "Park players" who now make so insistent and successful a claim upon municipalities, big and small, to provide public courts for them to play on. The increase in the number of Park players is the most recent and one of the most satisfactory manifestations in connection with the game in this country; though the crowds of players who put aside their rackets for the time being and invade Wimbledon to witness the play in the Championship Meeting have for a long time past borne evidence to the attractions the game possesses as a spectacle. The lawn tennis played by the Park players, taken as a body, is of course in a totally different category from that shown at Wimbledon by the pick of the world's players; but their keenness is as great and their demand will soon be for instructors as well as for courts. I hope they may get them, for there is no reason why the Park player should not develop as good a game as anybody else, if he can get good coaching. His demand for hard courts is sufficient indication that he appreciates the benefits they confer,

and that he will no longer be content with a bumpy and undulating court marked out on what may once have been the "grass" of a common. There is a great field for "missionary" enterprise among the Park players. If a few good club players would offer their services for coaching for an hour or two each week, much good might be done; and the Park players, besides learning the game, would also have the opportunity of becoming acquainted with its traditions, which otherwise they cannot be expected to know. It would be a thousand pities if the enthusiasm of these latest recruits to the game should be damped in any way; for it is by no means impossible that from their ranks may rise, as has happened in America, players worthy of international honours.

Another indication of the growing popularity of the game is the great increase in the number of entries at the tournaments, which are held all over the country from May to September in each year. It is no exaggeration to say that at most tournaments in 1921 the number of competitors was anything from 50 per cent. upwards larger than it was in the previous year. The ordinary club player who, a few years ago, would scarcely have dreamt of entering for an open tournament, is nowadays not content unless he plays at three or four in the course of the summer, and he maps out his holiday with this end in view. He is wise; for the first step towards playing well is to play against better players. And it does not take the novice long to find them in a tournament. To play in half a dozen tournaments during the summer affords experiences both for the body and the mind which are very well worth having. The constant meeting with new opponents, the excitement of the game, with its ups and downs of fortune, and the health-

giving exertion which is inseparable from it, combine to make a month's tournament play a cheap investment for the money of any man between twenty and fifty; for his dividend of health and pleasure is certain, even though he should never win so much as a third prize in a second-class handicap!

There are always pessimists who, even if they are capable of perceiving a boom, only regard it as the certain prelude of a slump. Lawn tennis has undoubtedly had both experiences. It boomed all through the Renshaw period, and lost popular favour thereafter (though there were many very fine players during the intermediate years), until the Dohertys became a name to conjure with. But when they, in their turn, ceased to play, the game had taken too firm a hold on the popular imagination to fall from favour; and though, so far as home players are concerned, the Dohertys have had no successors of like skill, the average standard of play has continued to improve. But it became the turn of the Dominions and of foreign countries to produce the "star" players of the game. And this was only natural, since not only did the courts on which they learnt to play confer on them that freedom of stroke which is so largely denied to home players, but, not being tied to the orthodox English style, they developed new strokes and tactics of their own, and by thus adding to the variety and interest of the game raised it higher than ever in popularity. So high, indeed, that lawn tennis need never fear to lose favour again; for it is no longer, as in the Renshaw days, merely a fashionable craze, but a game approved and valued for its intrinsic merits all the world over.

It cannot be doubted that a considerable contributory factor in the spread of lawn tennis is the space now given



to it in the daily and weekly Press. In the early days no tournament outside the Championships at Wimbledon was ever so much as mentioned in the daily Press; and the amount of importance attached by editors even to the Championships may be estimated from the fact that even as late as 1890 (the fourteenth year in which the Championship had been played for), the *Times* considered four lines an ample space in which to chronicle the success of W. J. Hamilton! When there is "nothing in the papers" about a game, its popularity is not likely to spread rapidly, since the majority of people are unaware of its existence and therefore incurious about it. It was not till the early years of this century that the daily Press began to pay any real attention to the game; and the honour for first giving it a "good show" must be allotted to the *Daily Telegraph*, which was fortunate in being able to avail itself of the pen of W. P. Groser, who not only understood the game very well, being a fair player himself, but wrote about it in a way which enabled most of his readers to understand it, too. His early death was a great loss to good lawn-tennis criticism; but his place on the *Daily Telegraph* was soon filled by A. Wallis Myers, an equally illuminating and interesting writer, and an even finer critic of the game. Wallis Myers also succeeded the late B. C. Eveleigh as lawn tennis editor of the *Field* in 1910; and his articles and reports in the great daily and the great weekly have done far more for the game than has ever been generally recognised. He knows the modern game and its chief players of all nationalities better than any other man in the world; and besides his work in the newspaper Press, most of his many books on the game have already reached the dignity of standard works. Perhaps none but he could have so successfully

instilled the importance of lawn tennis, both as a game and as an international bond of union, into the vision of the editor of a great daily paper as to obtain a column on the "middle page" for it, on the occasion of an important Championship or a Davis Cup match.

But where the *Daily Telegraph* led other papers were not slow to follow; and nowadays "big" tournaments are well reported in most of the daily Press, both London and provincial. A. E. Crawley, a learned theorist, and at one time a very good player, has always something interesting to say; and T. M. Mavrogordato, in the *Times*, adds the charm of classical allusion to the soundest of criticism. H. S. Scrivener possesses an encyclopædic and practical knowledge of lawn tennis from its early days; and among others whose articles and reports are always well worth reading are S. N. Doust, in the *Daily Mail*, S. P. Blackmore, in the *Westminster Gazette*, Hamilton Price, H. R. Macdonald, E. E. White, and H. L. Bourke. And a good rival to any of these is W. A. White, the correspondent of the *Birmingham Daily Post*, whose keen sense of humour adds greatly to the interest of his reports of midland tournaments.

In the early days of the game only three weekly papers, the *Field*, *Land and Water*, and *Pastime*, devoted much attention to lawn tennis. *Pastime*, though it devoted some space to other games, made lawn tennis its chief feature. Its editor, N. L. Jackson, was one of the two principal Referees of the early tournaments; and he doubled the parts very well, for he was a good descriptive writer himself, and was careful only to get people who knew what they were writing about to contribute to his journal. In 1886 a rival to *Pastime* appeared in *Lawn Tennis*, but the new paper only lived

through that one season. (I wonder if there is anyone except myself who possesses a complete file of it? Probably not.) It was a most entertaining journal, and I was always sorry that it failed to "carry on." *Pastime* itself ceased publication some eight or nine years later; and the career of *Lawn Tennis*, the present Official Journal of the game, began soon afterwards: this paper has continued (with a break from the autumn of 1916 to the spring of 1919) to be the only weekly paper in this country solely devoted to the game, up to the present time. Several foreign countries, including France and Germany, boast lawn-tennis journals; but far the best of them is *American Lawn Tennis*, which more nearly approaches what a journal dealing with the game ought to be than any other, home or foreign.

The mention of America brings me to the event which I regard, more than anything else, as the chief factor in the world-wide spread and development of lawn tennis—the institution, in 1900, of the Davis Cup. This Cup was presented by an American enthusiast, Dwight Davis, for a competition to be called the International Championship. I am glad, however, to say that though the latter title for it has been fully justified, the competition has always been popularly known as "The Davis Cup," and I hope (and have no doubt) that it always will be so known, for the name of the donor certainly deserves immortality in the lawn-tennis world. For the first three years the Cup was played for it was simply a match between England and the United States—no other country had any pretensions to enter the lists. The U.S.A. won the first two matches, both of which were played on the soil of the donor of the Cup; on the third occasion the Dohertys succeeded in bringing back the trophy to this country. And that was the last

occasion on which England and the United States were the sole competitors for it. In 1904 Belgium, Austria, and France all entered; in 1905 Australasia appeared for the first time. For the next seven years no fresh nation competed, though South Africa entered, but did not play, in 1911. In 1913 Germany, Canada, and South Africa made their first appearance. After the War, the first new-comer was Holland, in 1920. But in 1921 no fewer than seven nations which had never competed before sent in challenges—Denmark, Spain, Japan, the Philippines, Czecho-Slovakia, Argentina, and India. That the Cup has always been won by either America, Australasia, or England is beside the point. The point is that the players of close on twenty different nations have, at one time or another, competed for it. If it had not been for the institution of the Davis Cup, the progress of lawn tennis, though sure, would certainly have been far slower. The keenest, because the most widespread, international rivalry in the history of any game has been fostered by the Davis Cup; in every country where lawn tennis is played there is the incentive to practise, to improve, to develop the national standard of play, with the view of being able to send in a team for the Cup, which, even if unsuccessful, may yet do credit to the land from which it comes. No match ever played in this competition has failed to consolidate the good feeling and good sportsmanship of those who played in it; the game and the Cup between them have founded a freemasonry of players all the world over. And that no fewer than thirteen nations which play the game should in one year compete for the Davis Cup is, I think, ample justification for conferring upon lawn tennis the title of “The World-Game of To-Day.”

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## STYLE



## CHAPTER II

### STYLE

BEFORE I make any attempt at instruction, I want to make it quite clear that there is no such thing as "the correct style" at lawn tennis. Lawn tennis is a game at which, though nine out of ten men will perhaps make a particular stroke in the same way, the tenth man will come along and make the same stroke by quite a different method. It may be an "ugly" shot to look at; but if it achieves the purpose for which it was intended—the winning of the ace—does its ugliness matter? Not a bit. It is better to make a succession of "ugly" winners than a succession of losers played in the most artistic way imaginable. This is perhaps a coarse way of looking at the thing; but common-sensible people always get the pull over the æsthete in the long run. No doubt there are many wrong ways of making any shot in the game; but the point is, not that there are many wrong ways, but that there are many right ways, each according to the personal physical capabilities of the player. Take service, for example. The ideal service, in the eyes of the looker-on, is probably the "cannon-ball" delivery of players like Tilden or Gobert. But these players can only deliver this particular service because their great height enables them to hit the ball down from a point above the ground to which players like Roper Barrett, Mavrogordato, or Doust could not possibly reach. To tell these last



three to serve like the first two would be ridiculous, because no man can overcome physical impossibilities. They have to be content with another kind. Their service is not so spectacular; there is nothing devastating about it; but all the same they contrive, by different methods, to win a pretty good number of their service games. The way of Gobert and Tilden and a dozen other hard-hitting servers of over six feet in height is no more "the right way" to serve than the methods of shorter men: it is the "right way" *for them*, because their height gives them a great natural asset of which they would be foolish not to take advantage. But to hold them up as models on which a man of 5 ft. 6 in. or 7 in. should serve would argue a painful lack of commonsense in an instructor.

Then, again, take "the right way" of holding a racket. There is no one and only right way; because, again, all men are not made alike. Some have big hands, some have small; some have strong wrists, some have weak; some have long fingers, some have short. The grip that suits one may very well not be at all suitable to another. One thing, at any rate, is certain; if you hold your racket in a way that is comfortable to yourself you are much more likely to hit the ball as you want to hit it, than if you hold it in any way that gives you a cramped and uncomfortable feeling.

As long as games are played by individual human beings and not by machines there will be different ways of making the strokes required in them. With regard to lawn-tennis strokes I feel inclined to go nearly all the way (*mutatis mutandis*) with Rudyard Kipling, who remarks—

"There are nine-and-thirty ways of constructing tribal lays,  
And every single one of them is right."

At any rate, every one of them is right that achieves the intended object. What is the good of playing a shot of which, while one result is to give the cameraman a perfect and artistic finish, the other result is that the ball is in the bottom of the net? If you can hit the ball at the pace and to the place you want, and keep on doing so, you need not bother about the "style" in which you are hitting it.

It is hardly too much to say that all the greatest players the game has known have had styles of their own. They have copied nobody; they have evolved their own game. Equally true it is that all these great players have had copyists; but many of these copyists would have done better for themselves if they had never taken their particular great player for a model. They have gone on slavishly trying to imitate the inimitable until they have ruined any originality of their own. In the end they find that the model is uncopyable, because it is some physical peculiarity which has given him his "style."

The great player is born, not made. If, when you are young, you have health, strength, height, and a temper that cannot be ruffled; and, when you grow older, you add the experience you have gained to your ordinary (or extraordinary) brain-power, you ought to be able to play lawn tennis satisfactorily to yourself for quite a long time without troubling about achieving a perfect style. If you are successful, your "style" is the right one—for *you*—even if it is not beautiful. And, any way, it is better to keep your eye on the ball than to have it perpetually distracted by the click of the camera !



**GRIPS**



## CHAPTER III

### GRIPS

ALTHOUGH in the last chapter I said that there was no one and only "right way" of holding the racket, because hands were not all of the same size and shape, fingers not all of the same length, and wrists not all of the same strength, yet there may be said to be a general sort of "stock" size, and the "stock" size player had certainly better give a trial to what is known as the "orthodox" grip before he discards it for some peculiarity of his own. But the one thing essential about the grip of the racket is that it should be *comfortable*. If it is not comfortable—if your racket doesn't "come up" nicely into your hand, so that you *feel* you can hit the ball with it—try another. For it is a sure thing that you will never hit the ball as you want to as long as you don't feel your racket comfortable in your hand.

To give the "orthodox" grip a trial—and, after all, remember that the general run of good players use it—pick up your racket so that the "V" formed by your first finger and thumb grasp it close to the end of the handle. Then close your other fingers round the handle, gripping it with them and supporting it with the first finger. That is the "orthodox" forehand grip; and the orthodox backhand grip is like unto it, except that the whole grip is moved round towards the

back of the handle about half an inch, and the racket is now "supported" by the thumb instead of by the first finger. This "support" by the thumb is, by most players, felt to be stronger and firmer if the thumb is laid along the back of the handle, and not round or down it; but these other two ways of using the thumb in the backhand grip both have their advantages. Again, it is purely a question of which feels most comfortable to the player. If the "thumb along the back" grip feels the more comfortable, all the better, for that grip certainly gives more freedom to the wrist for controlling the direction in which you want to hit the ball.

But whatever grip you adopt, either for the forehand or the backhand, you are pretty sure to find that when you begin to get variety of stroke into your game you will have to adopt slight modifications of it. The orthodox grip, though all right for a plain service, forehand volleying, and driving a ball which has passed the top of its bound, becomes, to most players, uncomfortable when they try to execute the horizontal forehand drive, which is the most modern and one of the most effective shots in the game. For this stroke, if it is to be hit really hard (and nothing less is of any use), you will probably find it more comfortable, and obtain a greater sense of power, if the palm of the hand is rather more *behind* the handle than in the orthodox grip, and the handle lies obliquely across, rather than in, the palm. You can very soon see whether you have got this grip (which is used by most of the "hurricane-hitters") right, because, when you hold the racket out at arm's length, the face will be quite vertical, whereas with the orthodox grip the face slopes a little backward.

Some good players do not let the hand rest against

the "button" at the end of the handle, but hold the racket further up the handle. They seem to gain accuracy from so doing; but I am sure they lose pace. Pace is essential in modern play, and "Hold the racket long"—even to the extent of getting the leather button into the hand—should be the motto for those who want to attain it. The short hold is bound to cramp the wrist, and you must have free play with the wrist to get pace. But, again, for a "chop" shot, which does not need pace, a shortened grip is advisable, because of the necessity for controlling the shot exactly. The short grip gives control, the long grip gives pace. Be prepared to change your grip according to the shot you want to play. But, above all things, be comfortable with it.





## **GROUND STROKES**



## CHAPTER IV

### GROUND STROKES

EVEN in these days when the ability to volley well is a necessary part of the equipment of every player who wishes to attain success, good shots off the ground are at least as necessary. There is, at any rate, one shot which *must* be taken off the ground—the return of the service. And, since the subsequent play of the rally depends very largely upon whether that return is well played or not, ground strokes in considerable variety must be learnt with the view of playing it well. Even when both players volley on every possible opportunity, at least half the shots in a match will be played off the ground, and more than half of these will be forehand strokes, because not more than one per cent. of players prefer to play backhand strokes rather than forehand strokes; and, if their backhand is persistently attacked, take care to be in a position where they can turn their reply into a forehand stroke.

The forehand stroke off the ground has gone through many stages, from the plain fast-footed hammering of H. F. Lawford, the running diagonal “Irish” drive of W. J. Hamilton, with the ball hit at the last possible moment before it touched the ground a second time, the powerful hitting of Joshua Pim and S. H. Smith, and the shots with the lightning speed of which A. W. Gore used to paralyse his opponents in the past, right

through to the top-spin drives of Wilding and G. L. Patterson, the "sliced" drives and "chops" of Tilden, and the tremendous "horizontal "punch" of W. M. Johnston, of to-day.

The main difference between the driving of the past and the driving of the present is that, owing to the greatly increased pace at which the game is played, it has become almost a necessity for a player to hit the ball as soon as possible—at, or even before, it has reached, the top of its bound after pitching. So time is gained, and time is all-important. Moreover, the ball is now hit far more often when the player is on the run, and not when he is standing still, than it used to be, and for the same reason—the saving of time. And, as it is hit when the player is on the run, the run *continues* after the ball is hit—the run and the hit are all part of the same action. It is easy to see that, the player's object being to "get in" to a position at the net, if he is on his way there when he hits the ball, and continues without any pause on his way there through and after the shot, he will get there more quickly than if he took up a fixed position, waited for the ball, hit it, and only after it was hit started on his run to the net. It is precisely for this reason that "action photographs" of the present-day player, while they present an admirable picture of an actual shot in the making, often give scarcely any indication of the principle on which the shot is made. And, though the running drive is played with apparent ease by the expert, it is too often forgotten by the player who wishes to copy him that the expert has generally only attained his proficiency by a long course of driving without running. Except in the case of those who have a natural genius for the game, and an eye of hawk-like keenness,

the way to make the shot has to be learned first, and the pace which hitting it on the run puts on to it developed afterwards. Every player, except the genius aforesaid, should, in fact, be content to walk before he can run.

. The principles on which the ordinary plain forehand drive is made are these. Place your feet well apart, left forward, right about on a line parallel to the flight of the ball; let the weight of the body rest mainly on the right foot. Bend your knees a little; bend your hand back, and keep your elbow down, well away from your side, to avoid cramping your shot. Keep your wrist taut. Don't get too near to the spot where the ball is coming to—you should be about a yard to the left of that spot. Now you are ready for it. Before the ball bounces, swing your racket back, and then swing it forward again freely, parallel with the ground, so as to meet the ball about waist-high, at the top of its bound. Don't be in too much of a hurry to hit the ball. Don't snatch at it. Wait till it is nearly opposite your right foot. If you hit it too soon before it "comes up" to you, you will not get such good control over the shot, because you will be hitting it in front of the centre of your weight. Hit the ball as nearly as you can with the centre of your racket, and don't let your eye leave its flight for a moment until the racket and ball are in contact. When you have hit the ball, don't stop your stroke, but bring your racket right on through as far as you can, so that at the end of the stroke your arm is straightened right out, with no bend of the elbow at all. Bring your shoulder well round, and get all your body-weight into the stroke; if you do this you will find that your weight transfers itself in the course of the stroke from the right foot to the left, and that you are, in fact, moving forward as the stroke finishes.

That is the basis of the ordinary forehand drive—the drive which most of the great players of the past have used, and which many players of to-day are content to retain when they have perfected their control of it. But new times bring new methods, and the old forehand drive, in the general speeding-up of the game, has undergone many modifications. The most important, perhaps, of these modifications is its transformation by means of certain alterations into the “horizontal” drive of to-day. The “horizontal” drive is believed by modern players to be faster than anything yet seen; and they have a certain amount of justification for their faith, though I doubt if “Ghost” Hamilton’s “Irish” drive did not travel with at least equal speed, although it was taken at the bottom of the bound instead of the top, and I think the drives of S. H. Smith and Gore, at their best, were as fast as the drives, say, of W. M. Johnston. But, in instancing these three players, I am really supporting the advocates of the fast, hard-hitting game; because Hamilton’s drive was always taken on the run, and Smith’s and Gore’s were hit from the shoulder. The two last named were, in fact, the pioneers of the “horizontal” drive. As played to-day, it involves some modifications of the old forehand drive. First, the ball must be hit sooner, not waited for till it is nearly opposite the right foot, but almost as soon as it has passed the front foot. Secondly, it must be played from the shoulder, with the arm and racket in a straight line, both in the swing of the racket and at the moment the ball is struck. It is shoulder-swing *plus* body-weight that puts the pace on to the shot; and the momentum of the body, when the shot is properly made and the racket brought right through, is such that the right foot swings off the ground and comes forward,

and the player is already on his way to the desired position at the net. The two photographs of B. I. C. Norton, Plates I and II, show a good finish to the forehand drive; the first being the end of a shot straight down the side-line, and the latter of a cross-court drive. Note the right foot just leaving the ground, the body-weight being all transferred to the left foot. There is no manner of doubt, moreover, that he has hit the ball, and hit it with all his might!—just as, indeed, it ought to be hit.

But the horizontal drive cannot be employed on wet or slow courts, because the ball will not come up high enough—it must be quite waist-high—to hit it horizontally. Only on good dry fast grass courts and on hard courts is the horizontal drive capable of execution; and since, in this country, good dry fast grass courts are the exception and hard courts have hitherto been only for the lucky few, it is quite necessary for the majority of players to master the ordinary forehand drive as well as any of its modifications. In this respect, however, matters will mend—and soon, and then the horizontal drive will have a better chance of coming into its own.

One of the earlier modifications of the plain forehand drive was the “top-spin” or “lifting” drive. For this the backward swing is shortish and lower than in the horizontal drive; and the racket is travelling upwards when the ball is hit, so that it is hit on its underside. Just as the ball is struck there is an “upturn” of the racket, which has the effect of *pressing* top-spin on to the ball. The result of a shot thus executed is that the ball starts very fast and with a rather high trajectory, but the top-spin brings it down very quickly after it is over the net. And this quick drop makes it



an admirable weapon against a volleyer, because he cannot ordinarily volley it down, and because the top-spin causes the ball to shoot up on the face of his racket, and so makes it very hard to control. On the other hand, the top-spin drive is not much use against a base-line player; the pace soon goes off it, because it drops at a steep angle, and so the base-liner only has to step forward a little to have an easy shot to play. The lifting drive is very useful when the court is slow, and the ball consequently does not come up waist-high. It is, however, difficult to control: to place the ball, by its means, exactly where you want to place it takes a great deal of practice. It is also exhausting. This was a great shot of Tony Wilding's, and most of the best players include it in their armoury. Few play it better than A. H. Lowe, and the photograph of him, Plate III, gives a good idea of the position the player should be in just before the ball is struck.

Another good exponent of the top-spin drive is C. E. von Braun, who plays it with a sort of "whip" action; and the two photographs of him, Plates IV and V, give a fine illustration of how he does it, especially with regard to the very complete follow through of the racket and the fine footwork by which the weight is transferred.

The next variety of the forehand stroke off the ground is the "chop" shot. This is almost the reverse of the "lifting" drive in the manner of its execution. The back-swing is high, and the shot itself is very largely a wrist shot, the racket being drawn under the ball at the moment of impact. The "chop" shot cannot be hit as hard as a drive, because there is nothing to hold it in court; but speed is not a requisite for it. The ball, indeed, travels slowly, and with a rather high trajectory;

when it pitches it breaks very fast to the right (from its maker's point of view) and even sometimes a little backwards towards the net. It is more important than ever to keep your eye on the ball all the time you are making the "chop" shot, because even a very slight error in hitting will spoil the shot altogether: a little too full, and it is in the net; a trifle under, and out it goes. The "chop" shot is, of course, no good against a volleyer, because it is fairly high in the air and offers him as good a target as he could want. Moreover, when he volleys it, the undercut on the ball makes it come off his racket very fast and so adds pace to his stroke. Its chief use is as a defensive shot against a hard-hitting base-liner; and there is no shot that will knock him off his game better. It is extremely difficult to hit really hard off a "chop" shot, because it does not "come up to" the striker, and so he is very likely to snatch at it. In addition, the quick break across him after the pitch makes it awkward to time and to deal with at all successfully.

A player who has all these forms of the forehand drive at his command is very well armed indeed. The natural tendency is to adopt one of them only, and to try to develop that one into a first-class stroke. But nowadays one shot, however good, is not enough; and a man who wants to be a really good player must have the "top-spin" and the "chop" shot to supplement his ordinary or "horizontal" drive. At the same time, the "horizontal" drive is the most important, because if you only use a top-spin drive you will be tired long before the end of a hard match, and if you can only play the "chop" shot you are acting on the defensive all the time. More than merely defensive play is required nowadays; it may win sometimes, but only

very rarely; it will certainly not win against a varied and well-sustained attack.

Now we come to the backhand drive. \* This is a more difficult affair, because the swing of the arm is necessarily across the body instead of, as was the case with the forehand drive, free of it. This prevents, to a considerable extent, the shoulder being got into the stroke, and it also makes it impossible to take the ball so far back (if occasion demands) as the forehand stroke. Neither can the ordinary player get anything like the same amount of power behind the stroke. Yet it must be learnt, because since nearly every player is weaker on the backhand than on the forehand, the backhand is sure to be the point selected for attack by his opponents. And that it can be learnt, and made a weapon of attack instead of merely of defence, is, as will be seen, capable of demonstration.

The way to play it is, firstly, to swing your body well round sideways, so that the right shoulder faces towards the net, and to get your feet well apart, keeping the left foot well back. Secondly, have your arm nearly straight, and keep the wrist loose, for the backhand shot is very largely a wrist shot. Grip the racket with the face at a slight angle above the wrist, and pointed a little towards the ground. You should bend your head down, because you will be able to watch the ball on to the racket better by so doing. Swing your racket as far back as you can past your left shoulder; time your forward swing so as to hit the ball at the right moment (as in the case of the forehand drive), and continue your swing well through after impact. So you will get pace. Getting the arm and racket well through at the finish seems to make up for the necessarily shorter backward swing.

The great point about the backhand stroke is that it must be played with freedom. That is also precisely its great difficulty, because the conditions for it are all against freedom. But these can be overcome. There have been many men who have used their backhand drive as an attacking and not merely a defensive shot. Among the best English exponents of it in this form I should place R. F. Doherty and E. R. Allen in the past, and F. G. Lowe to-day. I suppose it is really the shot which Lowe prefers to any other; he is certainly a master of it. Look at the photograph, Plate VI. Here Lowe is just in the right position for the beginning of the shot—feet well apart and right shoulder facing the net. Plate VII shows him at the finish of a cross-court drive, diagonal from corner to corner; notice the full follow through, the face of the racket turned over, showing that top-spin has been put on the ball, and the full weight of the body pressed into the shot, for the weight is now obviously all on the right foot. Plate VIII shows the finish of a “sliced” shot down the side-line, made on the run, and is a good example of the perfect balance of the player although he is in rapid motion. Look also at the picture of B. I. C. Norton, Plate IX, which shows him rather more than half-way through the stroke—just after the ball has been struck. The weight is coming forward; and Plate X shows the finish of the shot, with the weight fully transferred. This particular shot is a cross-court drive, and should be compared with the photograph of Lowe at the finish of a similar shot. Plate XI shows the finish of Norton’s side-line drive, with a beautiful follow through. There is no lack of freedom in *that* stroke! In Plate XII he is in the act of making a backhand drive which he has had to run hard to reach. Two good examples of the way

in which a backhand stroke can be used to baffle a volleyer are seen in the pictures of Mrs. Larcombe at the beginning and finish of such a shot—Plates XIII and XIV. This shot is a very difficult one, because there is only a small space to play it into. It is intended to cross a volleyer in position at the net, and to drop just inside the opponent's left-hand side-line only a few feet from the net. Extreme accuracy of touch is necessary; fortunately for her, that extreme accuracy is just what Mrs. Larcombe is able to supply; and it is astonishing how often she brings this shot off, to the dismay of the volleyer; especially as the shot is (sometimes intentionally) played from a rather "tucked-up" position, which has probably made the volleyer think he has nothing to fear!

For the backhand stroke, like the forehand, it is quite possible to use top-spin, or to make a "chop" shot of it. But backhand strokes of any kind are less easy to control than forehand strokes, and so the plainer the shot the less difficult it is to send it where you want it to go. In any case, get your plain backhand shot into a state of accuracy before you attempt modifications of it.

All the ground-strokes (except the "chop" shot) with which I have already dealt, both forehand and backhand, have been shots which are generally played from behind or in the region of the base-line. But ground-strokes often have to be played from much further up the court, *e. g.* the return of a weak service, or when you have been drawn up the court by a "drop" or "chop" shot, played by your opponent in order to give himself a volleying position at the net. One of the most effective returns of the service (and it can be used on other occasions with success), is the slow cross-

court return across the server as he comes in to volley, especially if he is a little slow on his run up. Two photographs of S. N. Doust, who plays this shot to perfection, are Plates XV and XVI. In the first of these he has just played a backhand return of the service from the left court; in the other is shown the corresponding shot, forehanded, from the right court. These shots must be played slowly, otherwise they will go out; but there is no better method of countering a volleyer who is a shade slow in getting in. It is important to remember when playing ground-strokes from far up the court that you have not now got the whole length of the court to drive into, and for that reason cannot afford to hit as hard as you can from the baseline. Generally your main object will be to pass your opponent who has got into position at the net; and, if he is in the middle of the net and you are in the middle of your court, this is a matter of great difficulty. If you do not lob, you will have to run great risks; but if you *can* bring off a passing shot to either of his sidelines from this position it will probably have the effect of keeping him back for a time.

To conclude what I have to say about ground-strokes, the most important thing of all, whatever kind of shot you may be playing, is to concentrate your whole attention on hitting the ball in the way you wish and to the place you want it to go to. Don't bother about what is going to happen afterwards; think of nothing but the actual stroke you are playing. And if you can convince yourself that you are going to hit it as you wish, it is more likely that you will than that you won't.



## **THE VOLLEY AND THE SMASH**





## CHAPTER V

### THE VOLLEY AND THE SMASH

LAWN tennis would be a dull affair without volleying—dull for the player and still duller for the looker-on. Through volleying the game has “speeded up,” because the whole *raison d’être* of volleying is the saving of time. The volleyer, by hitting the ball in the air shortly after it has crossed the net, saves all the time it would have taken to continue its flight (if unintercepted by his volley), pitch, rise again, and then be taken as a ground-stroke; plus the additional time the ground-stroke, played further from the net, would have taken to recross it. Besides this, he also saves the time he would have taken to reach a volleying position after making his ground-stroke, because he is in the volleying position already. In a minor degree, further time is saved by the volley as against the ground-stroke, because hardly any swing back is needed for the volley. To get pace on a ground-stroke there must be a back-swing, otherwise there could be no forward-swing. But when volleying, the pace is already *on* the ball—put there by the opponent’s drive; all that is necessary is to deflect the ball from its course. The work is done by the wrist and forearm, not by the shoulder, as in the case of ground strokes.

The volley, largely by reason of its being a time-saver, has aggression, or attack, for its guiding principle.

All volleying, if this principle is to be put into practice, should be done from between the service-line and the net; volleys made from further back in the court than the service-line (with the exception of the "Smash") must have less attacking force. The nearer you are to the net for making your volley the better, at whatever height the ball may come to you, whether overhead, shoulder-high, waist-high, or below the level of the top of the net. Your object in volleying is not necessarily to win the ace outright; though when that end is attainable, don't miss your chance. More often than not one volley is only made to make an opening for another which is to be the outright winner, the first being only intended to drive your opponent so far out of position that he will be forced to give you an easy shot off his return of it. It is the *direction* in which you hit your volley that counts; it is of no use to volley the ball gently straight back to your opponent; it must be placed so as to force him to run if he is to get to it. The simplest type of volley is the ball that comes to you at any height from shoulder to waist, *i. e.* all that come to you above the level of the top of the net and yet not so high that you have to reach, or even jump, up to hit them. To the man with a quick eye and a strong wrist the volley, either forehand or backhand, is an easier stroke than the ground-stroke; in the case of backhand strokes it is *much* easier, because hardly any swing is necessary.

For the waist-to-shoulder-high volley you should bend both arm and knees a little, and bend your head a little to the side to which the ball is coming so as to be able to look along its line of flight. Keep the head of the racket up, and rather in front of you; and as the ball nears you give the racket a very short swing

back and hit the ball firmly, letting the forearm and wrist—especially the latter—do the work. Follow through, with straightened arm, in this type of volley, so that at the end of the shot the head of the racket is pointing to the spot where you have aimed the ball.

Look at Plates XVII and XVIII, which show S. N. Doust making one of the forehand cross-court volleys for which he is so famous; the former showing the stroke just after the ball was hit, and the latter the finish with the racket pointing to the direction the ball has taken. Plates XIX, XX, and XXI show the corresponding backhand shot, an oblique volley across the court almost parallel with the net. In the first of these the ball has just been struck; in the second the stroke is half-way through (observe the ball going away); in the last it is completed. Norton's backhand shoulder-high volley is well shown in Plate XXII; the ball has been firmly hit, and the weight has come well forward. Plate XXIII is a characteristic backhand cross volley by Miss Ryan, made on the run; and Plate XXIV a backhand "push-volley" of Doust's.

If, in a bout of quick volleying, you find the ball coming straight at you instead of to either side, the best way to deal with it is to take a step to the right and make a backhand volley. And remember to volley downwards, not upwards or even "flat."

But there are many occasions when the ball will not come to you obligingly between shoulder- and waist-high, but considerably lower. The volley is still possible—indeed, it may be the only way of returning the ball at all. Still, the ball now has to be hit upwards; and hitting upwards means that the stroke is more in the nature of defence than of attack. The most important point to keep in mind about low volleys is

that you must "get well down to" them. By this means you will keep the shot as "flat" as you can, consistently with going over the net. Sweep at the ball with a stiff wrist: this is the only way to get pace on it, and if it has no pace on it, your opponent generally gets an easy shot.

The low volley and the method of making it are well shown in the photographs of Doust, Plates XXV and XXVI; note how he is getting well down to the ball in both cases. This essential towards playing the low volley well is even more strongly shown in Norton's low volleys, Plates XXVII and XXVIII; and, to a less degree, in Plate XXIX, a very delicately played shot in which the wrist is doing all the work. Mrs. Larcombe's backhand low volley, Plate XXX, also shows the player well down to the ball, and here again the wrist is quite evidently the controlling factor in the shot.

One form, however, of the low volley may be used as a really aggressive shot; and the opportunity for it occurs when you are close to the net and far to one side of your court, and can play the shot (either backhand or forehand) across the court as nearly parallel with the net as possible. The racket-head must be practically horizontal for this shot, which is wholly a wrist shot and wants a very delicate touch. It needs some learning; but of all the low volleys it is by far the most effective when you have learnt it.

Other forms of the volley include the "Lob"-volley, the "Stop"-volley, and—the volley's supremest form—the Smash. The Lob-volley is a shot which ought to be used much more than it is: its value is almost unrecognised in this country. But it, again, needs a lot of learning; if it fails to come off it is often fatal. By the Lob-volley the ball is deliberately

pushed up into the air with the intention of sending it over the head of an opponent at the net. If the object is attained, it is hardly ever possible for him to get back in time to take it off the ground, because it carries more pace than a lob played off the ground. But you must make sure it is high enough to clear him, otherwise he will get a nice overhead volley. You should certainly pick your man to play this shot against. Against a shortish man whose foot-work is defective it will probably be a winner every time. There are plenty of these about; but beware of trying it on a Lycett!

The "Stop"-volley is another useful volley, especially against a base-line opponent who revels in hard hitting. The harder the ball comes the more effective is this volley, which, played close to the net, drops almost "dead" just the other side of it. To make it you must be quite close to the net, not more than three or four feet away at the most. Hold your racket perpendicularly (head upwards, of course) and, just as the ball comes to it, move the head of the racket upwards with a sort of "dragging" action. Or, if you find it easier, you can get exactly the same effect by moving the head of the racket downwards, with a kind of "dig." In neither case is there any "hit" about the shot; it is done entirely with the wrist and fingers, which hold the face of the racket flat against the ball, like a wall, the "drag," or "dig," causing it to drop dead instead of bouncing back. The base-liner has no earthly chance of getting anywhere near it.

Finally, the Smash. Though all volleys are, comparatively, aggressive—even the low defensive volley is more aggressive, in the sense that it is time-saving, than waiting to make a ground-stroke—not all volleys, as I have said, are intended to win the ace outright. But

the object of the Smash *is* to win the ace right away, by the sheer pace of the shot, not taking into account at all whether your opponent can reach the ball or not. The ball, in fact, is hit as hard as you can hit it. The action of hitting it is the same as in the case of the fast overhead service, because it is played at a ball that is falling, in the same way that the ball is falling when thrown up for the service. To execute it you should be standing a very little behind where the ball is falling; swing the racket right back, as in the service, and up again and forward, fast, taking the ball as high in the air as you can, so that at the moment of impact you get your shoulder and all your body-weight well into the shot. Bring your racket right through after the ball is hit. The ball must be hit as high in the air as you can reach to it, because the speed at which it is going to travel after you have hit it demands that it must be hit down from a height to keep it in court, and if you let it drop too far, you will only hit it into the net. To gain this end you will often see good players on tip-toe, or even jumping up, to smash.

Observe the two pictures of R. Lycett, Plates XXXI and XXXII, in both of which the player has both feet off the ground. The former illustrates a smash made from a position close to the net, probably off an attempted Lob-volley; but Lycett, though he has had to jump to reach the ball, has evidently "put it away" all right. The latter is a very characteristic stroke, a smash taken on the run, and from further back in the court. Three other photographs of Lycett, Plates XXXIII, XXXIV, and XXXV, show, respectively, the player running forward to deal with a short lob; reaching up to hit it (the ball has just been struck); and the—evidently successful!—finish of the shot. Another good finish of a

smash is to be seen in the picture, Plate XXXVI, of G. T. C. Watt, one of the best and severest overhead volleyers. Plate XXXVII shows Doust half-way through a smash made from the service-line; and, Plate XXXVIII, at the finish of one made close to the net he has hit the ball deep to his opponent's forehand corner.

There are a few players—R. Lycett is a good example—who can smash from any part of the court with deadly effect; but to be able to do this, even if a natural genius for the shot is not absolutely necessary, demands a long apprenticeship and continual practice. Its constant achievement at once places a player in the very front rank, especially in doubles; but any tallish man with a good eye ought to be able, with a fair degree of certainty, to smash any overhead ball that comes to him within twelve feet or so of the net. But if the ball does not come conveniently for a smash, it is best to play it as an overhead volley, and to place it well to the back of your opponent's court.

Plates XXXIX and XL show Doust playing an ordinary overhead volley; in the first the ball has just been hit; in the second the player is still not quite through to the finish of his stroke. Notice particularly the wrist-work which has, so to speak, "shut down" the ball.

The short lob, of course, offers the best opportunity for the Smash—it simply asks to be killed; but lobs that are by no means short can also be smashed with practice. The chief difficulty about dealing with these is that, while you have to run back to get into the position to smash them, you must also never lose sight of the ball. Consequently, you must run backwards, not turn round to run. And you must bear in mind that, though the ball must still be hit hard and hit down, it



must not be hit so much down as when you are near the net, but in a flatter line of flight, otherwise it will not clear the net. In the case of the smash from the back of the court, therefore, you must be more directly underneath the ball as it drops, instead of a little behind it. The things to keep in mind when executing it are to hit it as hard as you can, to hit it down, and to aim it deep and generally to the middle of the back of the court. But it is its speed more than its direction which makes it a winner: the middle of the back of the court is only recommended as affording greater margin for error, than if it were aimed at the side-lines. Above all, hit it *confidently*—it is no good to be half-hearted about a Smash.

In conclusion, with regard to all kinds of volleys, remember never to move backwards—to draw away from it—as you are making your shot. Move forward to hit it a little, if you can; if you can't, stand still. Hit all volleys firmly, and (except stop-volleys and cross-volleys) deep into your opponent's court. With respect to cross-volleys I have said little in this chapter; because you will find, in the chapter which follows, written by my friend, S. N. Doust—that master of the cross-volley—information and advice from the fountain-head. I commend what Doust has to say to the careful attention of all who wish to become good volleyers. To study it will pay them well.

**VOLLEYING**  
**BY S. N. DOUST**



## CHAPTER VI

### VOLLEYING

*By S. N. Doust*

It is curious how certain strokes are evolved. The cross-court volley became famous with the members of my club in Sydney (known as "The Wahgunyah" Club), whose court had a high wooden fence about five feet away from the side-lines. Because of that fence, we directed all our strokes across the court, endeavouring to make the ball strike that fence before our opponents could reach it. Many a visiting player would go away with a "barked" arm or cut leg in his endeavour to get the ball, muttering curses about the fence. The members of the club, however, were too wily ever to attempt that, and let the point go. Therefore the cross-court volley became to us a scoring shot on account of that fence. When we left that club to join the Sydney Lawn Tennis Club (which is, in Sydney, the equivalent to the All England Club), all of us "Wahgunyah" players found out that even where there was plenty of room, the cross-court volley was a stroke to be developed, for if it did not score outright, the opening was made for a winning shot.

Volleying to be effective must be aggressive. It is an attacking game, but before volleying is attempted ground-strokes must be developed as a foundation for your volleys. Assuming, therefore, that a player has

got his ground-strokes in order, he must, to become good, learn to volley. First of all let me say at once that although there may be a little in this article about "How to Volley," it is far from my intention to dictate to anyone how they should grip a racket for volleying. I am a great believer in a grip that is natural and comfortable to the player concerned; I would not have him slavishly copy someone else's grip, which might not be at all suitable. But as to the actual making of volleys, I will say that in *low* volleying it is absolutely wrong to follow right through. Pace must be obtained from the action of the wrist more than from the arm. Also it is impossible to be a quick volleyer, *i. e.* able to make several successive returns, if you follow through, which necessitates making the racket travel too far and thus taking too long to bring it back for the next volley. F. M. B. Fisher is a great example of wrist action. Very few players make the ball travel quicker off the volley, yet his stroke is an extremely short one, resembling a stab. High volleying and smashing are a different matter. There, the amount of follow through depends upon the distance the player is from the net. Placing is the most essential thing in a good volleyer, whether in making high or low volleys. The crisp low volleys or the hard overhead smash must be placed in an awkward position or the advantage of being at the net is lost. The aim of a volleyer should be to attack, but as every lawn-tennis player knows, although your intention is to be aggressive, you are often forced by the superiority of your opponent to defend, and this is where the low volley is so useful.

Low volleying may be divided into two categories :—

- (1) Defensive, *i. e.* hitting up.
- (2) Offensive, *i. e.* hitting down.

The difference between 1 and 2 is a mere matter of distance (of about a foot or two) from the net at the time of striking the ball, yet that difference of distance may often mean the difference between success and failure. It is much more important in a double to volley down than it is in a single. Volleying up with two opponents at the net is simply asking for trouble. Far better to remain at the back of the court than be always volleying up. In a single it does not make so much difference, because your opponent has more ground to cover, and a well-directed volley with an upward trajectory may pass your man if he is at the net, and if he is at the back of the court you do not court disaster. Position, therefore, is necessary for offensive volleying. The distance from the net depends upon your opponents. If their returns are of a high trajectory and good length, it is not necessary to advance so close to the net as when the returns are low and short, in which case one should be never more than a yard away. Short volleying is always effective in a double and often in a single.

Tactics of volleying should be studied carefully. They vary according to whether the match is a single or a double, and to whether your opponent is himself volleying.

The angle-volley as a general rule should be avoided in singles. I am a great believer in being behind the ball, so that if your volley is across the court in order to get behind the ball you have to make for the opposite side of your court quickly enough to intercept the obvious side-line shot, but in doing this you leave yourself open for a cross-court passing shot. Angles make angles. The only angle that can be made with safety in a single on the volley is when you are in the centre of your court

and you volley deeply into one of the corners. This is only a half-angle shot, and if your opponent tries to pass you only half the distance has to be covered to intercept his return; further, the larger part of his court is exposed for what should be your winning volley.

There are exceptions, of course, when it is quite safe to try short and sharp cross-court volleys, and when safe opportunities do occur a good volleyer will not fail to seize them. There is really no hard-and-fast rule to be laid down; and this, to my mind, is one of the chief charms of lawn tennis.

Doubles play, on the other hand, lends itself to angular shots. Here you have two opponents whose idea is to keep a parallel formation whether at the net or at back of the court. The tactics in doubles is to break up their formation, and to expose a vacant spot on their side. Angular shots when accurately made break up the position of the very best pairs, and in so doing you generally expose the centre of the court for what is the safest of smashes to follow. There is little risk in making the angles in doubles, because you have a partner covering up the dangerous side-line, and all that is required of you is to cover up the answering angle shot.

Good volleyers must have the sense of anticipation; speed of foot without anticipation is of little use. A good example of this is C. P. Dixon, who, I suppose, is one of the slowest men on his feet, yet so wonderful is his anticipation that he generally arrives at the correct position in the court in ample time to make his delicate volleys. He is always behind the ball. This sense of anticipation is dormant in most of us, and is developed through years of play and experience. It is more marked

in some than in others, as is every other quality of the lawn tennis player. But it is certain that all the champions have it to a marked degree—without it they would never have won their championships; and without it a player might as well bury his racket as to attempt to volley effectively.





**SERVICE**



## CHAPTER VII

### SERVICE

EVERY rally in a game of lawn tennis must be started by a service, and every player, however bad, has the ball under his own control, if only for a moment, when he is going to serve. He has the "first go" at it, and, if he can make good use of his opportunity, he may (especially in doubles) put himself in a position to win the rally quickly. The attributes of a first-class service are high speed and good direction. High speed can only be obtained by hitting the ball downwards from a height; and the greater the height at which the ball is hit, the more speed can be put into it. Such speed, that is to say, as will cause it to pitch in the proper court: the hardest-hit ball that falls outside the service-court is of no practical use. But the height from the ground at which the ball can be hit is bound to depend upon the height of the player. For a man who is only 5 ft. 5 in. or 5 ft. 6 in. in height to try to reproduce the service of a man of 6 ft. 2 in. or more is a physical impossibility. Shortness of stature is, therefore, a handicap at lawn tennis so far as speed of service is concerned; the small-made man must try to make up for speed, which he cannot attain, by good direction, which he can. And, since the majority of players do not average more than 5 ft. 7 in. or 5 ft. 8 in. in height—and some very good players are a good deal shorter

even than that—good direction, and not terrific speed, must be their object.

After all, the great object in serving is to make it as difficult as possible for your opponent to return the ball. If your height or strength prevent you from serving so fast that you will serve right “through” your opponent, so to speak—in other words, beat him outright by the sheer pace of the ball, so that he will be unable even to hit it at all—it is nevertheless quite possible to serve a ball which he will find it difficult to return well. Aces won outright by “express” service are not common, even to a Tilden or a Patterson. Even the “super-server” would think he had done pretty well if he won more than a dozen aces in the course of a match by “untouchable” services. And he will, I think, win fewer in future, as soon as “standing-in” to deal with “express” services is generally recognised as the best if not the only means of dealing with them successfully, and players take their courage in both hands and put this recognition into practice by learning to hit a rising ball. The whole history of lawn tennis has been concerned with the battle between the server and the striker-out. In the early days, when few services were severe, the striker-out had the advantage, only to lose it as the service developed and became a strong weapon of attack instead of little more than the means of putting the ball into play. At the present time the striker-out is creeping up again; and, in singles, is almost if not quite on level terms with the server, who still, however, has a strong advantage in doubles, because there he has a partner to cover half the court for him. This duel will continue as long as the game is playêd; and it is quite good that it should do so, for a defence is discoverable to any attack, and the discovery of that defence develops

it, in time, into counter-attack. Thus the game improves, and will continue to improve.

Attack is the essence of the game, and the possession of the service gives the server the initiative in that attack. What should his object be? First—and this is attainable by few—to serve with such speed combined with good direction that his opponent will not be able to return the ball at all. Alternatively—and this should, with practice and experience, be within the reach of anybody with any pretensions to being a player—so to place your service that your opponent will have so difficult a shot to make that his return will be weak, and you will have a chance to make a winning shot from it. “Attack,” nowadays, is practically synonymous with attack by volleying; and service is the first step to this end, for the possession of a good and well-placed service is the only thing that makes it possible to run in and take up a volleying position right away from the start of a game. Your aim, then, should be to make your service pitch as near the back of your opponent’s service court as you can, so as to keep him at the back of his own court, because the further back he is the longer it will take him to get into a volleying position himself. But not only to the *back* of his service-court; it should be also directed to the *side* of the court on which he is weakest—this will generally be his backhand—or to the side where he is least expecting it. It will help you to direct your service as you wish if, just before throwing up the ball to serve, you “take aim” with your eye at the exact spot in your opponent’s court where you want your service to pitch.

But the most important point to remember about the service is that you should *vary* it, in direction and (occasionally) in pace, so that your opponent will never

know exactly where it is going to pitch. If you keep on serving to a man's backhand, for example, he will take up a position which will enable him to make some sort of a return off it. But if you vary, and keep on varying, the direction of your service—sometimes down the middle, and sometimes across the court, and sometimes straight at your opponent—he will never be sure what he is going to get. Keep him guessing as much as you possibly can. He won't always guess right! One of the most awkward plain services for the striker-out to return successfully is when the ball pitches within a few inches of the junction of the service-line and the centre-court line—the “down-the-middle” service. But the wise server will not exploit this service too much, rather will he keep it for a very important ace; when, for example, he is within a point of a game or a set. Then, if he has only previously used it sparingly, it is very likely to be an outright winner.

For the majority of players—those, I mean, to whom the “express” service is a physical impossibility because they cannot reach up high enough to deliver it—it will be best to develop a plain overhead service, and get perfect control over it before they attempt any of the variations which have from time to time been introduced. When you have mastered the plain service, you will at any rate have something to fall back upon if the attempts at further developments which you are sure to make do not prove satisfactory. The way to deliver the plain service is this. Stand “loose” and comfortably, and be sure that both your feet are behind the base-line; because, if you touch the base-line with either foot, or swing one foot over it before you strike the ball, it is a “fault.” Throw the ball up from your left hand; straight up, in front of the head, and anything from

two to four feet above it. With your weight on the left foot, bent elbow, and loose wrist, swing your racket up over your right shoulder; and, as the ball drops, swing your racket forward, and hit the ball as high up as you can, "timing" the hit so that your arm is at full stretch at the moment of impact. Get the right shoulder well into the stroke, and sweep your arm right through after hitting the ball, so that the head of your racket is in front of your left knee at the end of the shot. You ought to be able, in time, to make your service sure by this method. And to be sure of it is of the first importance. It is better to place the ball just where you want it, and to be sure that it is going there, than to send over the fastest "expresses" and not to know whether they are going in or out.

That is the ordinary plain service, made with the full face of the racket, and almost without spin, though nearly every service has a *little* spin on it. When you can play it at a good pace, and can control its direction so as to be able to place it just where you want in your opponent's service-court, you will have a very useful service, although the highest speed is denied you.

But to every young player whose height is sufficient to enable him to serve a very fast service, I would give the advice: Begin right away from the start to serve as fast as you can, either with an ordinary plain service delivered from the height at which your longer reach enables you to hit the ball, or with an "American" service. Your height will give your service extra pace. The higher in the air you can hit the ball, the greater speed you will get, and the more space in your opponent's service-court you will have to hit it into. Every very fast service is bound to pitch within a few inches of the back of your opponent's service-court if it is to pitch



in it at all; and the reason a short player cannot serve the very fast ball is because its trajectory from the comparatively low altitude in the air at which he can hit it does not give it time to fall quickly enough to pitch in the service-court at all—it pitches beyond it. He cannot, in fact, get *over* it enough to bring it down soon enough; but every inch more of “reach” that a player has, the harder he can hit his service, because he is an inch more “over” it when he hits it. Consequently the ball is travelling at an acuter angle to the ground, and less likely to be a fault beyond the service-line. A short man can drive (given equal physical strength) just as hard as a tall one, because neither the tall nor the short man will ever be hitting a ball that is more than about three feet from the ground; the tall man only gets the pull in service and in smashing. But it is a big pull.

The “American” service is very well worth possessing as an alternative to the ordinary service, for the reason that it puts a great deal of spin on the ball, and makes it “kick” wide when it pitches. Besides, it helps to start the server on his run in even more than the ordinary fast service does. Its disadvantage is that the muscular effort involved in its execution makes it very tiring; and, unless a player is very strong and very fit, to use it continuously through a match would probably take more out of him than he could afford to give away. The way to make the “American” differs from the “ordinary,” in that you must (standing loose and easy as before, but rather more sideways to the net) bend your body well back and to the left, your head to the left, and throw up the ball to the left and in front of your head. Hold your racket rather more loosely than usual; swing it right back, well down, and, as you

bring it up again, hit the left underside of the ball a hard upwards sideways blow. If correctly hit—and it takes a great deal of practice to hit it correctly—it will swerve widely through the air, first outwards (to your right) and then inwards. Directly it pitches it will kick away, fast and high, to the striker-out's backhand. This is where the "American" service is so very valuable; because, served into the left court, the striker-out (unless he stands right in to take it on the rise) is forced far outside his court to get to it at all; and even if he can get to it, the still rapidly-spinning ball makes it most difficult for him to control his return of it.

Besides the ordinary plain and the "American" services there are others in less common use, of which F. M. B. Fisher's "Reverse American" is a beautiful example, and wins him many aces. As its title implies, this is the "American" service played, so to speak, the other way round. To make it you bend your body and head to the right, throw the ball up to the right, and put the weight on the right leg. With elbow bent, and wrist very loose (because this is almost entirely a wrist-stroke—there is no hard hitting about it), hold the racket out in front of you. Throw the ball up, and move the racket upwards and backwards across your face, and hit the ball a glancing blow from right to left. When it pitches, it will kick in the opposite direction to the "American," *i. e.* away to the striker-out's forehand.

Then there is the "Twist" service, both plain and reverse. The plain "twist" (or, as it is sometimes called, "sliced") service is used successfully by S. N. Doust and by many other good players whose height does not allow them to develop a very fast overhead service. For the twist service you should throw the

ball up rather more to the left than in the ordinary service, and your racket must be travelling upwards and across, from left to right, when you hit the ball. This action puts a left-to-right spin on the ball, and when it pitches it will keep low and break to the striker-out's right. The chief—almost the only—user of the “reverse twist” service in this country is A. H. Lowe. In this service the racket strikes the ball, which is thrown up well in front and a little to the right, a glancing blow, travelling almost horizontally across the ball as it is struck. On pitching, it does not rise from the ground even so much as the plain twist, and bounds to the striker-out's backhand.

There are also “freak” services of various kinds which are occasionally seen. There was a player in this country some years ago who rejoiced in the possession of no fewer than eight totally different services, all of which were more or less effective, at any rate in his hands; and I should think that Nicolas Misu, the Rumanian who used to add so greatly to the gaiety of the tournaments in which he played, must have employed many more than eight. He was certainly an admirable exponent of “variety” in service. He exploited cuts and chops and slices and twists of all kinds; I have even seen him send over an ordinary, plain, very lofty “toss,” pitching at the back of the service-court and bouncing yards off the ground. Or a slow, underhand and backhand, heavily-cut ball that would pitch close to the net, and bounce straight back into it! But this sort of thing is outside the range of practical play, its only possible use being to confuse and baffle your opponent. There is nothing, of course, in the least unfair in “freak” services; their very occasional employment may even win you an important ace or two; but

in the long run they don't pay for the trouble taken to acquire them. Don't waste time in cultivating "freak" services. A plain fast service is much more useful than any "freak," if you can depend upon placing it so that your opponent always has to run after it. Always try to make him run.

The photographs which illustrate this chapter include three of M. Alonso, the Spanish player who made so great an impression at Wimbledon in 1921, and, though he did not win the Championship, was considered by many good judges to be the best player on the ground. Plates XLI, XLII, and XLIII show him at various stages of his service, from the moment of striking the ball to the finish of the follow through. Lycett's service, shortly after the ball has been hit, is well illustrated in Plate XLIV; and the less ornate, but very powerful, service of the Hon. C. Campbell in Plate XLV. Norton's service, at the beginning and finish of the shot, is shown in Plates XLVI and XLVII. The good balance of the body in both positions should be noted. A. E. Beamish's service (Plate XLVIII) is also a model of grace and perfection of balance.



**SINGLES**



## CHAPTER VIII

### SINGLES

AT the end of the chapter on Service my last word of advice to the Server was, "Always try to make the striker-out run." So my first words to the striker-out are, "Always try to take up a position from which you will have to move as little as possible to return the service." Unless the service is returned, the point is lost. Unless you can return it consistently well, or at any rate well enough to win at least one of your opponent's service games, you cannot win the set.

As we have seen, the service has developed from a comparatively mild affair into a powerful weapon of attack. With each increase of severity and variety in the service, the striker-out has been driven to devise new means of coping with it. The phases of the struggle may very roughly be divided into three periods: the first, when, the service being comparatively weak, the initiative in the game lay quite as much with the striker-out as with the server—possibly rather more; the second, when the server, by means of increased speed and by using the service as the prelude to an immediate volleying attack, forced the striker-out into a mere defensive; the third, still developing, when the striker-out found, when dealing with a "hurricane" service, not only that the best means of defence is to stand up to the service and hit it at or even before



the top of its bound, but that this defence, in itself, actually transfers the attack to himself instead of leaving it with the server, owing to the saving of time it effects. By this means he can hit the ball so much sooner than if he had waited for it at the back of the court, that it is back over the net before the server has had time to reach a volleying position. In addition to this great advantage, the striker-out, directly he has hit the ball, is himself so much nearer the net that, if his shot has been anything like a good one, he can take up the volleying position himself without loss of time spent in running all the way in to do so.

These three periods have melted almost imperceptibly into one another; indeed, the transition from the second to the third is as yet only beginning to be generally recognised. But the clash of first-class player with first-class player, stroke against stroke and brain against brain, is bringing it daily into greater prominence; and it would not greatly surprise me if, in a few years' time, there should be an appeal for some additional advantage to be given to the server, in place of the demand which there has been for many years past, for a rule to lessen the server's powers and the advantages which they have given him.

The changing respective advantages held by the server and the striker-out tend to make all books which seek to give instruction in how to play the game out of date within a few years after they are written. The early books were written mainly for the instruction of the base-line player, ground strokes being (rightly) regarded as the foundation of the game, and volleying being rather tentatively advised as a desirable thing, indeed, but only for the audacious. Then came the time when the volleying attack was held up as the only

thing worth serious consideration, and the base-liner was almost relegated to the ranks of the "has-beens." The tendency of modern play is to show that neither ground strokes nor volleying alone are good enough to lift a player to the highest class. The two must be combined, and the "all-round" game is the thing to be aimed at. During the long period—now, I think, beginning to pass away—when the advantage of initiative has rested with the server, the advice given to the striker-out on how to return a fast service has been to stand well back beyond the base-line to play his shot, because it is always easier to run in than to run back for the purpose of hitting the ball. This was sound advice for just so long as the service did not become too severe, either owing to its pace or to the wide-breaking character of such varieties of it as the "American." But, with the advent of the "super" service, the striker-out who followed this advice found himself driven further and further out of court, and his stroke, played (if at all) when the ball was falling again after the top of its bound, was postponed so long that a server following in quickly, was nearly always in position to volley the return, and the striker-out had no chance whatever to get back into court to deal with that volley. The striker-out, therefore, had to evolve some other means of dealing with the "super" service, to counteract the disadvantages with which it saddled him. And the plan he adopted was, instead of standing away two or three yards beyond his base-line, to stand well inside his court so as to be able to take the service at latest at the top of its bound before it could force him outside the court to reach it at all. This demanded a quick brain, a quick eye, and some courage; but those who tried it soon discovered that it paid. One

of the very first examples of the success of this manœuvre was seen in the Challenge Round of the Singles at Wimbledon in 1913, when Wilding employed it against the American, M. E. McLoughlin. McLoughlin's service was the talk of the town: almost entirely by its pace, power, and kick, he had defeated, among others, Roper Barrett, Parke, and Doust, and won the All-Comers' Singles. Parke, always a believer in taking the ball late, as most Irishmen are, had stood five yards outside the base-line to return the American's service, and had generally failed to return it—often to reach it at all. In the later stages of the match he “stood in,” as a heroic measure, and had more success, but it was too late to retrieve the lost ground. When the Challenge Round came on Wilding, who had watched McLoughlin's previous matches and studied his methods carefully, stood in from the start, and did not allow himself to be disconcerted by failing to return a single one of the services in McLoughlin's first service game. He was “getting his eye in” to them—and the American's second service game went to Wilding! The spell was broken; McLoughlin did not get a set, and the forest of American flags which had fluttered so furiously along the stands at the beginning of the match had not a waggle left in them at the end of it.

Ever since then it has been recognised among first-class players that to stand up to the very fast breaking service and hit it at or before the top of its bound is the only satisfactory way of dealing with it. Parke (having learnt his lesson) and Kingscote returned the American services in 1920, if not with ease at any rate with success. And to others—R. N. Williams especially—it seems to come easy.

That this method is not practised in this country

more than it is, is mainly because the service of "home" players is comparatively so poor that its employment is not necessary. When there is neither pace nor kick in the service the inducement to depart from the older method of returning it is not considered, by many players, sufficient. We have never loved change. And, as it is but little practised, the "home" player is still very liable to find himself altogether outmatched when he is up against a man who has a really good service. But consider the advantage of extending the principle to the return of services which are *not* particularly fast or difficult. Not only will the "super" server, when he is encountered, be easier to deal with, because the striker-out will not be suddenly forced to take up a position in court which is new to him, and from which he is not in the habit of making his returns; but against the ordinary service, he will be so much nearer the net, and will gain so much time by that nearness, that he will be able to convert what has hitherto been for him mainly a defensive stroke into an actively attacking one. And attack is the essence of to-day's game.

But attack does not necessarily mean the immediate winning of the ace by the return of the service. This is sometimes, of course, possible; but, in singles especially, the placing of the return to such a spot in your opponent's court as to make his next shot a difficult one is far more often of importance. Perhaps more aces are lost through trying to win them too quickly than by any other means. Where you can place your return depends on whether your opponent is coming in on his service or not, and on where his service pitches, and what it does after it pitches. Take the case, first, of a diagonal service to your right court which pitches

well at the back and near the side-line and breaks outwards to your forehand, with the server following it to the net. You have a choice of several returns of this service. The easiest is to drive straight down the side-line. It is the easiest because you can hit it hard; and you can hit it hard because you have the whole length of the court to drive it into, and the side-line as a straight guide to your aim. The next easiest return is a lob, especially useful if the server is very quick in his run in, because it drives him back again at once; but your lob must be "deep" (*i. e.* played so as to drop within a few inches of his base-line, if possible), and directed to his backhand corner. If, on the other hand, he is *not* very quick on his run in, you may give him a "top-spin" drive to catch him at his feet, which is always a nasty shot to deal with; or you can play a slow cross-court shot in front of and across him as he comes in. When you are returning the service from the left court the backhand cross-court shot against a diagonal service comes easier to most people than the corresponding shot from the right court; but the straight drive down the side-line is more difficult, because backhand drives are, to nearly all players, more difficult to control and to get pace on to than forehand drives. The same difficulty arises with the drop-shot; but the lob is always useful and not much harder to play backhanded than forehanded. When the service is down the middle of the court you have less scope for your return. In this case a drop-shot or a lob is usually the best defence. A *fast* drive to the side-lines is nearly impossible. If you are driving from either corner you can hit hard down the side-lines because you have the full length of the court to keep your shot in court; but if you are in the middle of the court you

have not the whole length of the court to drive *hard* into against a volleying opponent, because of the angle at which the ball must travel; the hard-hit drive will certainly go out, and if it is not hit hard it will not travel fast enough to clear the volleyer. There is, of course, a hard drive down the middle of the court at your disposal; but, as that is just where the volleyer will be, it is not likely to be of much use to you.

When, however, your opponent is not first and foremost a volleyer, and does not run in on his service, all anxiety about your return being volleyed and killed is gone. On the other hand, you can't pass him; but you can keep him on his base-line, which is where you want him to be, until you can get a good volleying position yourself, by driving to either corner of his court, or (if you can get to the net immediately) to the middle of his base-line, from where it will be more difficult for him to pass you with a hard drive (because of the narrow angle) than from the corners. And remember that the base-liner is not to be despised; because, to have a good chance of success in playing from the position he has deliberately chosen, he will have developed a number of passing shots from the back of the court which may prove very disconcerting to a too-eager volleyer. If he is one who has done so, and you feel confident that he will not, in any event, assume a net offensive, the chop shot is an excellent counter as a return of his service, because his game will depend on hard hitting, and there is no better weapon than the chop shot for breaking up a hard-hitting game. Even an occasional lob (though it may seem absurd) is not to be despised, because it will certainly surprise the baseliner and may put him in two minds as to what to do with it. And when you have put your opponent in

two minds about any shot you have gone some way towards winning the ace.

The chief point, however, which you ought to keep in mind in returning the service (just as in every other department of the game) is not to stereotype your shot. You may have a "favourite" shot, and that shot may very likely be an extremely effective one. But if you use it *all* the time, don't imagine that your opponent is always going to be beaten by it; in the course of a game or two he will get to know how and when you play it, and where it comes to, and then he will arrange for it accordingly. Vary your returns as much as possible, and keep him in the dark as long as you can as to how you are going to return each of his services. Mix up side-line passes with cross-court shots, and don't forget the virtues of the lob. As I said at the beginning of the chapter, make *him* run as much as you can.

With the service successfully returned "the issue is joined," as they say in the Law. Obviously advice on how to continue the rally to a successful conclusion would be impossible to give in detail, since the conditions for the shots, and the positions of the players vary in every rally. Yet, in the singles game, there are certain general principles which every player should try to carry into effect when meeting a strange opponent—a player of whose game he knows nothing. The first and greatest of these principles is to find out as soon as you can what your opponent's weak point is, and then to attack it persistently. Very few players indeed are equally strong at all points; you should make it your first object to discover the shot that your adversary does not play well, or tries to avoid playing at all. In most cases this will be his backhand shot off the ground—by no means necessarily his backhand volley; for lots

of players have quite a respectable backhand volley who can hardly hit the ball over the net with a backhand ground-stroke. If you see your opponent "running round" to a ball you have sent to his backhand, in order to take it forehanded, you may be certain that if you can keep your shots near enough to his backhand side-line you will sooner or later get an opportunity to run in for an angle-volley across to the right of his court, which he will never have a chance to get to, because he has had to go so far out on the other side of his court to return your shots forehanded. Always begin by testing your opponent's backhand, and don't give it up because he happens to make a good passing shot or two from that position; go on with it until you find, as you will only very rarely find, that to attack him there is useless. If you find him strong from the back of the court play "short stuff" at him, which will force him to leave the base-line; he will not be able to hit the same sort of drive from the region of the service-line as he can from the base-line. If he is a big, heavy, man and the court is wet and slow, drive into each corner alternately; this will keep him on the run. Or try him with what somebody once called the "Trochaic Tennis" of Roper Barrett—a long one and a short one alternately; this also will keep him running. And, when employing either of these manoeuvres, remember the extreme value of playing the unexpected shot at him, *i. e.* when you have made several alternate drives to each corner, hit your next to the same corner as the last instead of to the opposite one—he will, in anticipation, have already started across to the other corner, and you will catch him on the wrong foot; or, after an alternation of "longs" and "shorts," play two "longs" or two "shorts" in succession, for which he will similarly be



unprepared. But remember, at the same time, that he will be trying to discover your weak points, too; conceal them as long as you can.

When you find that the tactics you are employing are winning the games for you, on no account change them. When you have got a winning advantage, do your best to drive it right home; if you "let up" and lose a game or two your opponent will get fresh heart and perhaps turn the tables on you. Never "slack" when leading in a game of lawn tennis; concentrate your whole energies on making each consecutive stroke just as you want to make it. I used, long ago, to play a great deal against a friend who was a better player than ever I was, and who invariably beat me in practice; but I never lost a match to him in a tournament. Simply because I *knew* he would slack off when he had won the first set (which I always took good care he did!), and trusted to his being unable to get going again when I caught him up. This plan always came off. Still, it has its dangers unless you know your man. Similarly, one of the best golf match-players I ever knew, when it was suggested to him that he had been rather merciless in beating a promising young player by 9 and 7, retorted: "Oh! I always keep youngsters' noses to the grindstone if I can! It does 'em good!" Which is equally good policy in lawn tennis.

On the other hand, if your tactics are only resulting in your opponent getting a long lead, change them for something else. If the best passing strokes you can manage from the back of the court are being intercepted and volleyed, go up and try a little volleying yourself. If you, volleying, are always being passed, keep back and see what, some sound, well-varied driving will do. Anyway, don't go on with the same sort of game that

is losing the match for you. If you are up against a much better player you will probably lose in any case; but there can be no harm in trying some other form of attack before you die. It may be just the one to turn the scale. *Study* your opponent. If you are keeping all your drives what is generally called "a good length," *i. e.* pitching within about a foot of his base-line, and yet he is getting them all back an equally good length to your base-line, and having the best of the exchanges, try the effect of some *slightly* shorter ones, playing them to pitch three or four feet short of his base-line. A "good-length" ball is only a good length if it is serving its purpose. I remember a man coming into my tent and saying: "I can't think how I lost to that chap! He never played a decent length shot all through the match." "Why didn't you beat him, then?" I asked. "Oh!" he replied, "I don't know how it was—I *couldn't keep them in to-day!*" The winner evidently knew something!

Again, study your opponent. For knowing what he is likely to do will help you to be in the right place to meet his return. Putting this knowledge into practice is "anticipation"—one of the most vital points of the game. Do all you can to develop your "sense of anticipation." This sense is, largely, inborn; but I am sure it can be developed by careful attention. The possession of it is certainly one of the hall-marks of the great player; indeed, a man cannot be a great player who hasn't got it. Norman Brookes has it most markedly, so has W. M. Johnston. The ball appears to fly to their rackets as if it were at the end of a bit of elastic—they seem positively to attract it. But Joshua Pim had the sense of anticipation in a higher degree, I think, than any other player I have ever seen.

He was hardly ever seen to run; but he was always ready, where the ball was going to pitch. For big, heavy men especially, a good sense of anticipation is absolutely necessary; for they cannot get about so fast as lighter men, and they tire more easily. Good anticipation may save a man miles in a match.

Don't be too downhearted because your opponent gets a lead. Every game is a separate affair to itself; what has gone before has nothing to do with the game which you are at the moment playing. If you can win that one, there is no reason why you should not win another. And don't forget that, though the possession of strokes is of the highest importance, a long match at lawn tennis is a test of endurance as well as of stroke-making. A tired man's strokes inevitably weaken; so do your best to run your opponent about as much as you can (once more, don't forget the value of the lob to this end!) while husbanding your own strength as much as possible, so that you may have just that little bit more left in you that will pull you through at the finish.

In conclusion, while the game is in progress, think of nothing at all but the making of each individual stroke as it comes along. Concentrate your attention, and vary your shots—there are no better axioms on which to base your play. When the game is finished, think it over; and remember that if you think it over intelligently, you can learn a great deal more from your defeats than from your victories.

## **DOUBLES**



## CHAPTER IX

### DOUBLES

A good men's double, in the general opinion, always has been and still is the most interesting form of lawn tennis, whether to the players themselves or to the spectators. One has only to run through the names of some of the great pairs of the past to recall match after thrilling match in which the giants of earlier days delighted packed stands at Wimbledon and elsewhere. Willie and Ernest Renshaw; the Baddeleys; the Dohertys; the Allens; Smith and Riseley; Gore and Barrett; Pim and Stoker; Beals Wright and Holcombe Ward; Gobert and Decugis; Rahe and Kleinschroth; Norman Brookes, with three successive partners, Dunlop, Wilding, and Patterson; R. N. Williams and Garland; Tilden and Johnston; Parke and Kingscote; Lycett and Woosnam—all of these pairs I have seen in victory and defeat, but far less often in defeat than victory.

And the secret of the success of all of them (with very few exceptions) was that they were real "pairs"—not merely combinations of two great singles players. They practised together; they seldom played with any other partner; they were the two interdependent parts of an intelligent machine. They knew each other thoroughly, and that knowledge was the supreme factor in their success. It is the first requisite of doubles play, and it

is quite as much owing to the lack of that practice together and that knowledge of each other as to any other reason that at the present time this country is far from strong in doubles play. Not that we are over-strong in singles either; but singles play is quite a different affair: two good singles players going into court together for the first time as partners in a double may very well both play 15 below their singles form. But let those two players play in doubles together for a whole season, and at the end of that time, if they have cheerfulness and their temperaments are not too incompatible, they may well be playing, in a double, 15 or more above their singles form instead of below it.

The secret of doubles, play, then, is "team work"—constant practice with, and thorough knowledge of, your partner. If you want to do well in doubles, first of all try to find a nice cheery partner; not necessarily one a good deal better than yourself. If you are lucky enough to be able to get one who is a good deal better than you are that is all to the good; but remember, in that case, that when you get into court your opponents, if they have their wits about them, will soon find out that *you* are the weak spot, and will give your stronger partner as little as possible of the game, concentrating their attack upon you. This gives them, from the start, a sound plan of campaign, which they would not possess if you and your partner were about equal in form. At the same time, one of your pair should be the "captain" of the side; and if there is any material difference in your form, that "captain" should be the stronger player of the two; for the weaker will have as much as he can manage to look after making his shots without also taking the responsibility for the tactics of the game. When you have found a partner who really

suits you, and whom you really suit, play together as often as you possibly can, and always stick to your own courts. (On the other hand, if you can't find a permanent partner, accustom yourself to playing in either the right or the left court indifferently, because you are certain to be paired up, at times, with a partner who "can't play in" the right or the left court, as the case may be. And this ability to play in either court may be of the greatest possible value when at last you find the real partner for whom you have been looking.) The more you play together, the better you will work together; you will become a "pair" in the true sense of the word. And, if you persevere, you will at least once in a season considerably astonish some fortuitous partnership of players either of whom could give your partner or yourself quite good odds in a single. Few joys in lawn tennis are equal to this !

With regard to choosing a partner for doubles, there is only one thing more that I can suggest. That is, to be born a twin. Twin brothers ever since the pre-lawn tennis days of Castor and Pollux, have proved an almost invincible combination. The Baddeleys and the Allens very worthily translated the classical tradition into terms of lawn tennis. Even non-twin brothers make successful pairs, as the Renshaws and the Dohertys conclusively demonstrated; but twins are better still, especially if you are so like one another that your opponents can't tell t'other from which, as was the case with the two great pairs of twin brethren just mentioned. Nobody ever knew the Baddeleys apart; there was, indeed, a stock joke amongst those whom they defeated that the better server of the two always fulfilled that function ! Be a twin, then, if you can; if not, be an ordinary brother. If both alternatives have already failed you,



get the best partner you can—but on no account a scowler!—and go on playing with him until you are a real “pair.”

Now, as to the way to play doubles.

Both the theory and the practice of doubles play have, as in the case of singles play, been the subject of heated controversy ever since the game began. The “formation” of the partners, whether “one up and one back,” as in the early days; or “parallel” throughout the game, either up at the net or at the back of the court; the position of the respective partners of the server and the striker-out—all these questions have been debated over and over again. But the game as it is now played by the best—or, at any rate, the most successful—players has found the solution to all of them: the right answer has been forced upon players, and forced on them solely owing to the greater speed, both of foot and stroke, with which to-day’s best players far outstrip their predecessors. The only formation which is to be a winning formation in the future, or until some quite unforeseen development arises, is the parallel formation of both partners *at the net*. Modern doubles play consists of a race for the net: the ball, in four cases out of five, must be hit *down* to finish the rally. The ball cannot be hit down by a stroke off the ground; it cannot be hit down by volleys behind, or even just inside, the service-line (except smashes); it can only be hit down by a player who is near the net, and the nearer he is the better, provided that his racket does not hit the net in the follow through after his shot. I have never seen any player get so consistently and continuously “on top of the net” as the Australian, Dr. E. O. Pockley; he was a most valuable partner in doubles for this very reason, and if his ground-strokes had been in the same

class as his volleying he would have been as good a partner as any player could wish to have. His position at the net was a model to all players who want to learn how to play doubles.

The perception of the truth of the axiom "all four at the net" has settled the debated questions of the proper positions, at the beginning of play, of the partners of the server and striker-out respectively. They must both be at the net. The server himself must get to the net as quickly as possible after he has delivered his service; the striker-out with the least possible delay after he has made his return of the service. For either to hang back is fatal. The modern doubles is pre-eminently a volleying game and its rallies are, accordingly, short. The side that gets most quickly into position at the net wins four aces out of five.

To attain this position, if you are serving, you must run in right on top of your service as fast as you can. Don't stop for an instant on your run in to see where the return is coming to. If it is going to your partner, he is already in position at the net, and will deal with it; if, more probably, it is coming to you, the place for you to meet it is as close to the net as you can get, so that you can not only volley it, but volley it *down*. If you delay on your run in, a good return will catch you at your feet, and you will make a mess of it. Unless you can volley it, the "attack" which your service gives you is gone.

But not only have you to get in quickly yourself—you have to do your best to prevent the man to whom you are serving getting in quickly after his return. You have therefore to consider how to place your service so that he will be in the worst position to return it, because he will be able to run in more quickly after

he has made an easy shot than after a difficult one. If you have a good service, the best way, when you are serving from the right court, is to serve straight down the middle line; in other words, to the backhand of the striker-out (presuming him to be a right-handed player). With nearly all players the backhand shot off the ground is the weakest point in their armour. Your service must be of a good length, *i. e.* pitching well at the back of his service-court; this gives both yourself more time to get in, and your partner more time to make a winning volley off anything like a weak return. If your first service is a fault, don't be timid and send a soft second service. You are surrendering the attack if you send an easy service into the middle of the court; and, moreover, you are giving your opponent an admirable opportunity of murdering your partner. A good second service is of even more importance in a double than in a single: any way, let it be *hard*; even if it is a fault your partner would probably rather lose the point than have his teeth knocked down his throat. Moreover, though you have lost the point, your opponents have not *won* it. There is a lot more difference in that than there seems to be, because it is only *winning* a point that gives confidence; a hard second service that is just a fault only occasions a sense of relief in your opponents—the striker-out thinks himself lucky that the ball was an inch over the line, even that he probably wouldn't have returned it if it had been right. The mere scoring of the point does not, in itself, give confidence.

When you are serving from the left court, bearing in mind that your opponent's backhand is probably his most vulnerable point, the natural thing to do would seem to be to serve diagonally across the court so as to attack him on his backhand. In many ordinary doubles

you will see this policy pursued; but, unless the striker-out is really very weak indeed on his backhand, I consider that the "down-the-middle" service is still the better tactics—for two reasons. First, the diagonal service gives the opportunity for the diagonal return; which, properly played (and it is easier played backhanded than forehanded), is about the best possible reply for the striker-out to make, because in a doubles court he has a very wide angle of the court to play it into, and the server, running up, has to hit a ball which is going across him instead of coming to him, which is always a difficult shot. Secondly, after his return of a diagonal service the striker-out can get to the net much more quickly (since at the moment of making his stroke he is much nearer to it) than he can after returning the "down-the-middle" service, which he will only have been able to do from some spot on or close to his base-line. It is perhaps almost too much to say that the diagonal service transfers the attack from the server to the striker-out, but, with really good players, it is not far off having that effect.

At the same time, don't stereotype your service. Don't always serve down the middle; if you do, your opponents will be prepared for it and take the proper measures to deal with it. When you see that they are evidently expecting this service, an occasional one across the court, either to the right or left court, is not unlikely to give you an ace. But if you have a really good down-the-middle service, fast and of a good length, use it as your chief form of attack; it gives your partner a much better chance than any other of getting in a winning volley, because, so far as he is concerned, it is almost impossible for the striker-out to pass him with any return from the middle of the base-line. And you

should look to your partner for quite a lot of winning volleys off the return of the service when you are serving well. That is the time when a good pair comes by its own.

The work of the server's partner is simpler, because he has not to get to the net. He is there already, and all he has to do is to deal faithfully with any return of the service made to his side of the court. He should especially be ready to move in and volley a return which is intended to go down the middle of the court, as he will be in a far better position to deal with it than his partner, running in, can do. If his partner's service is generally down the middle, and a good length, he should have a happy time; but he must look out that he is not passed down his own side-line if the service is a diagonal one. The only other thing which may worry him is a lob. For this he must run back, and, if he cannot get back in time to smash it, he will probably have to return it with another lob, getting back to his first position at the net as quickly as possible. Of all the four players in a double the server's partner ought to have the best fun; if he is anything of a volleyer and quick on his feet he should certainly make at least a couple of winning shots himself in most games when his side is serving. All this presupposes that his partner serves well, and has a good second service. The plight of the server's partner when "short stuff" is being sent over for the second service is much too painful mentally (and probably physically!) to talk about! Fortunately this seldom happens in good class doubles.

Now, having dealt with the attack, let us consider the defence.

The return of the service is an important matter in a single: in a double it assumes an almost life-or-death

character. A weak return ought to mean, and generally does mean, the immediate end of the rally; it should be killed outright either by the man already at the net or by the server coming in. The ability to play good ground strokes now becomes an invaluable asset to the striker-out; for a well-played return may instantaneously transfer the attack to his side instead of to the server's. Theoretically the striker-out has a choice of four shots by which to make his return—the drive down the middle of the court, the drive straight at the server as he comes in, the “drag shot” across the server, and the lob. There are also, of course, the drive straight at the server's partner and the attempt to pass him down his side-line; but the first of these expedients is unlikely to be of value, and the opportunities for the second are few, except against a rash and inveterate poacher. The striker-out should be able to play all the first four shots, according to which of them seems to offer the best chance, and to play them well. To have only one good return of the service is of very little value, because it will very soon be found out and “arranged for.” Suppose, for example, that you have carefully developed a shot (from the right court) which is not quite down the middle and not quite straight at the server, *i. e.* just clear of the server's partner, and yet well to the server's backhand. This is a very good and very useful shot, until your opponents find out that you invariably use it—and have got no other. Then its value disappears at once. The server's partner, finding that you never lob and never try to pass him down his side-line, will simply nip in and bite it off every time. One shot, however good in itself, won't do. You must practise and develop all of the four, and mix them up well in actual play, so that your opponents can never be sure

which one you are going to play. "Keeping them guessing" is at least a quarter of the battle in doubles.

The most paying of all returns against a server who is naturally slow in getting in after his service or who hesitates on his way to the net, is to drive straight at his feet. If you can catch him on or about the service-line you give him a most difficult shot to play; generally it means that your side should win the ace. The shorter his service pitches, the easier this return is to make, either forehanded or backhanded; off a short-pitched service against a slow runner, it is an almost certain winner.

The shot down the middle, well played, is also a very useful return. Especially when the service has been down the middle it is perhaps the best answer, more particularly from the left court, when you will be making it forehanded. You should keep it as near as you dare to the server's partner's side of the centre-tape, so as to induce just that fraction of a second's doubt in the minds of your opponents as to whose ball it is. Only a fraction of a second; but in that tiny moment the mischief may be done, and you will have the satisfaction of seeing them looking blankly at each other as the ball flies, untouched and irretrievable, between them. If you can bring off three or four of these "down-the-middle" returns in the course of a game or two early in the match, you are in a fair way to get your opponents rattled, because each of them will inevitably begin to lose confidence, not only in his partner, but also in himself, which is even more fatal.

Then there is the "drag shot" across the body of the server as he comes in. This is about the best shot to play against a man who gets to the net quickly. But it wants a lot of playing—perfect timing and perfect touch,

for the shot must be played slowly; and complete courage, for it always looks as if the server *must* get on top of the ball before it slides past him. But remember that the faster he comes in the more difficult he will find it to time his shot at a ball that is passing across him instead of coming direct to him. Few shots in the game give greater satisfaction to the maker of them, when they come off. And they come off surprisingly often, especially against a big, heavy player, however speedy. This, by the way, is one of the few shots which are easier to play backhanded than forehanded; therefore it is a form of return of which a man who habitually plays in the left court should take care to make himself master. When he can play it well he will win many an ace with it against a "rusher." The best opportunity for making it arises, naturally, off a short-pitched ball to the side of the court, the ball then travelling across the net in a line of flight almost parallel to it; but the shot can be made successfully from further back in the court, provided the service has pitched well to the outside line, though of course it is a more difficult shot from this position, owing to the deeper angle and the longer distance the ball has to travel before it crosses the net.

Remains, the lob. A well-played lob is the surest way of converting the return of the service from defence into attack, for the double reason that it forces the opponents away from the net, and gives the striker-out plenty of time to get in to the net after playing it. The lob is not nearly so much used as it might be, partly because of the difficulty of playing it and the fate that befalls it unless it is perfectly executed, and partly because most players prefer the more showy ways of returning the service. But if the object of a player is



to win the ace, regardless of "frills," the lob is a good friend to him. It can seldom be used to advantage off a fast first service; but a slower second service, which is yet of a good length, affords just the opportunity for playing it. Normally it should be played over the head of the server's partner, and not hit high in the air, but with a trajectory just high enough to clear the reach of his racket and to drop well at the back of the court. The reason why the server's partner should, normally, be lobbed is because he will have further to run than the server would; but if the server is a man who gets in very quickly to the net, especially on his slower second service, it is a paying shot to lob *him* occasionally, because he is already running as hard as he can in the opposite direction, and will have to stop himself and run back. But in this case it must be a high "toss" to make sure of its being well out of his reach; as you are playing it to a man who is in any case further back in the court than the man at the net, a low lob would be too dangerous, since its trajectory would either bring it just within reach of his racket or cause it to pitch outside the base-line.

Of these four returns of the service the two first, if made when the service is very fast and a good length, lose too much of their efficacy unless the striker-out has the courage to stand well up to the service and take it on its rise from the pitch. In fact, this "standing-in" position has got to be learnt; for every foot nearer to the pitch of the ball that you can stand in is not only a foot less to cover on your way to the net after your stroke is made, but gives the server a fraction of a second's less time for his run in. The realisation of this, and the determination to learn how to play this "snap" return of the service must, nowadays, be part

of the equipment of all good doubles players. No better counter to the fast, breaking, service is possible.

The pair that has these four main returns of the service well under control should not have very much to fear from even really good service. They may reasonably hope to achieve what only a short time ago was considered almost an impossibility, viz. to win a fair number of their opponents' service games. A good instance of this truth occurred in the Davis Cup doubles between England and America at Wimbledon a couple of years ago, when Parke and Kingscote won a good many games against the service of Johnston and Tilden. If their own service and overhead work generally had been in the same class as their return of the service America would not have won that tie by five matches to none. Yet the advantage which the service gives in doubles is still a preponderating one; and with the increasing speed of foot, and consequently of stroke, it is not likely to diminish in the near future. A pair whose ground-strokes are not good has no chance against it because, of all strokes in a double, the return of the service is the most important. Even more than in a single good ground strokes are the very foundation of the game, because the reduced margin of error given by the larger dimensions of the doubles court does not make up for the fact that the ball has to be steered past two opponents instead of one.

After the service and its return the rally in modern doubles is seldom of long duration. It is a short and sharp affair, because it is so fast that one of the four players either makes a winning volley or a miss very quickly. When four men have got eye, foot, brain, and hand all working at high pressure, something, somewhere, is bound to go before long. If some

painstaking statistician were to count the number of strokes (including service) in each rally of a dozen matches of first-class doubles, I am sure that the average number would not exceed four, and it would probably not greatly exceed three. Most rallies resolve themselves into whether the striker-out will get his return in quickly enough to catch the server at his feet as he comes in, or whether the server will get in quickly enough not to be so caught. If the striker-out is to get the advantage he will have to stand in to a fast service so as to take it on the rise, and he will have to be moving forward as he makes his stroke, so that he will be already on his way to the net as the ball is hit. The action of the stroke is continuous, not divided into the two sections of making the shot and subsequently running to the net. If the service is slower the striker-out should be in quicker still; but he must remember that the slow "drag" service, such as Doust, for example, employs, gives the server himself more time to get close in. Not every shot in a double is necessarily hit hard; the cross-court return across the server coming in is quite a slow shot; the lob is a slow shot. But when the rally is once started, everything in it is likely to be fast. Even the dealing with a lob. To turn round and "chase" a lob is seldom going to be of any use. You must accustom yourself to running backwards to lobs—it is not so difficult, with practice, as it sounds—because half the advantage that the lobber obtains by driving you temporarily out of position is neutralised if you are good overhead, and can hit it hard (as Lycett, for example, does) when running backward, and from pretty well any position in the court. The reason why you must run backwards (and not turn round) to deal with a lob is because that is the only way you can keep

your eye on the ball; and the ball must be kept in sight all the time if you are to deal with it efficaciously.

The winning of the rally ought to go—and generally does go—to the better volleyers; and the main strokes by which good volleyers win aces are the shot down the middle, the deflected or “glance” volley (at which Doust is such a master) directed to the outside edges of the court, and the smash. The volley down the middle is most effective against an inferior pair, or against a pair who do not know one another’s play very well; because in both these cases the tendency is for each player to leave it to the other. The “glance” volley is devastating in its effect, principally because, even if the opponent to whose side of the court it is directed is active enough to recover it, he is driven so far out of court in doing so that a very large area of his court is left open to your volley off his return. The virtues of the “glance” volley become readily apparent to anyone who watches Doust or Roper Barrett playing in a double. Miss no opportunity of studying the play of these two men, whose brain-work far more than makes up for lack of inches. The “smash”—the volley which is hit as hard as possible with the same full swing of the racket which is employed in a fast service—is perhaps the best ace-winner of all, for if it is properly brought off its speed and its downward direction combined are nearly always enough to prevent it being returned. To be “good overhead” is a most important asset in doubles; but there must be nothing half-hearted about the smash. You must “let go” at it: it is a shot to win the ace right away without any messing about. Even if a man who is normally good overhead should be temporarily “off” his smash, hitting it out or into the net, you won’t see him, after missing three or

four, hit the next one less hard. To begin to "pat" balls that ought to be killed just because, for the moment, you are not killing them, is the sign of an inferior player. The good player will always go on *trying* to kill, whether it comes off or not.

But in doubles especially you have to study your opponents' temperaments. Against a hot-headed, hard-hitting pair, who are not doing quite as well as they expected, slow stuff and lobs may pay much better than hard hitting on your own part. Two good players of whom the war deprived us, R. B. Powell and his namesake Kenneth Powell, used to beat many a pair of hard hitters by entrenching themselves behind the base-line and lobbing continuously till the others hit the ball out or into the net. A game requiring infinite patience, and not, quite possibly, an invigorating game to watch, but undoubtedly, in their case, effective. And, after all, players are on court to win their match, not necessarily to send the stands into transports of enthusiasm. A pair who can lob really well are, even now, not to be despised as opponents. Besides, a pair who have once been, as they will express it, "lobbed out of" a match, will never go on to court again against their conquerors with any real confidence. While on the subject of lobbing in doubles, by the way, I should like to tell you a little story with a moral. At a northern tournament, a good many years ago now, the Allens were playing a local pair who were normally considerably inferior to them, in the final of the doubles—a best-of-five-sets match. The twins won the first two sets pretty easily, and then their opponents had a brain-wave—they decided to lob. And lob they did. Both of them were pretty good at it, and they lobbed the Allens for two whole sets until they had lobbed them

absolutely dazed. So far, so good. But at this point the local pair determined to finish the match off in style, and demonstrate their versatility by knocking the exhausted twins off the court. So they abandoned their lobbing and went in joyfully to hit : with the very natural result that the Allens quickly recovered the control of the game and won the final set with the utmost ease. From which you may learn two things : first, not to give your opponents the kind of game they like ; and, secondly, not to abandon the tactics by which you are winning.

Though a rally in a modern doubles is usually soon over, it is not infrequently lost through over-impetuosity. You should not try to kill every ball that comes to you ; if your position is not right for a kill be content with hitting it firmly to the middle of the back of your opponent's base-line. Off the return you may get your chance ; and when you do get it, don't let it go. If you prefer to play your volley to the side of the court, play it fast, not slowly ; because if it is played slowly your opponent will not only have more time to get to it, but a good chance of passing you on your outside, with the big angle afforded him.

Sometimes in the course of a rally there comes a shot which you are in doubt whether to go for yourself or to leave to your partner. In theory, with a perfect pair, this doubt should not arise, for the partners should have a perfect understanding. But all pairs are not perfect ; and it is just as well that you and your partner should have a working theory of how to deal with doubtful shots. As a basis of agreement you will find that it will pay you best to settle either that the man to whom the ball would come as a forehand shot should play it, because it will be easier for him ; or that the man who

played the previous shot should take it, because he will have his "eye" in better for it. Many points will be saved by the adoption of one of these two principles; a pair that has a clear idea of the necessity of adopting an understanding about them will save themselves those agonised and ineffectual shouts of "Yours!" which put such heart into their opponents!

To sum up: a good understanding, a cheery disposition, good volleying, good ground-strokes—these are the foundations on which a good pair is built. Add to them Speed—the great essential—and you have the best possible recipe for success.

Few things are more difficult, or more profitless, than attempted comparisons between the players of the past and the present. Doubles, as they are played to-day, are so infinitely faster than the doubles of even a few years ago that such questions, for example, as "Do you think the Dohertys would have beaten Tilden and Johnston?" don't admit of any satisfactory answer. When I used to watch the Renshaws playing, I thought they were a wonderful pair; when the Dohertys gracefully eliminated their opponents I thought *they* were a wonderful pair; I have thought the same thing about more than one pair of the present day. Of the pairs of the distant past the Renshaws were bound to impress a youthful imagination—Ernest with his fast, plain-hit service, and Willie with his almost unerring smashes. At their best I consider them to be the best pair up to the time of the Dohertys. The Baddeleys were certainly a very good pair, more because they had such a perfect understanding of each other's play than from any miracles of stroke production. Their championship period was perhaps the leanest time of English lawn tennis. (For the encouragement of young players, by

the way, I may tell them only four or five years before the Baddeleys won the Championship they were each receiving  $\frac{1}{2}$ £30 and a bisque or two in the handicap singles at Eastbourne.) The Irish pair, Pim and Stoker, owed most of their success to Pim, whose marvellous anticipation was every bit as good in a double as it was in a single. That the two unorthodox pairs, S. H. Smith and Frank Riseley, and Gore and Roper Barrett, should have met with the success they did may seem remarkable to those who only know the modern double and cannot understand how a "one-up-and-one-back" pair can ever have been really good. But both pairs were, as a fact, extraordinarily good, and the partners in each pair shared the honours very fairly. All the volleying in these combinations was done by Riseley and Barrett respectively: Smith was never known to desert the base-line, and Gore, in his best days, eschewed the volley religiously. Riseley was (and even now is, I am happy to say) a natural hitter with a perfect eye: I have never seen a finer exhibition of volleying and smashing, so long kept up, as his play on the last occasion when he and Smith defeated the Dohertys. I remember remarking, very tritely, to a man sitting next me and watching the game that he seemed absolutely inspired. "Inspired!" retorted my friend; "he's *possessed*!" Barrett was, and is, as clever and brainy a volleyer as ever went on to a court, with a curious style entirely his own; he seems to push the ball away out to the sides of the court rather than to hit it, except when he gets right on top of the net and smacks one hard down, twirling completely round after his shot is made.

The Dohertys were certainly, in my opinion, better than any other pair who ever played on the Centre Court up to the end of their reign. Their play was easy and



graceful, but they could hit hard when they wanted to; their perfect understanding of one another was patent to everyone who saw them. Almost the only way in which their game differed from a modern double, was that it was not so fast. But to-day's speed was not then necessary. Their favourite volleying position was only a few feet inside the service-court; they were seldom right on top of the net. They rarely moved nearer in after their volleys. They played a game which was, at its best, better than the top standard of anybody else in their day: how they would have fared against a modern top-standard pair like Tilden and Johnston it is, of course, impossible to say. They could certainly have produced the speed, both of foot and stroke; and I do not think any modern service would have worried them greatly. I am inclined to think that they were the best pair I have ever seen.

There has never been any one man who was a better doubles player than Norman Brookes. He is another of the "brainy" ones, and keeps his opponents guessing all the time. I have the greatest respect for his successes, because he never seems to me to be getting the best out of his partners. He is so overwhelming, so dour, so unsmiling, that I have often thought Wilding seemed frightened to death to play with him. Certainly Wilding very seldom did play well in that partnership; neither did Patterson. Dunlop, being perfectly imperturbable, and more of Brookes' own generation, generally did play well. Anyway, Brookes has generally been good enough to win, however his partners might be playing; though they might have had a cheerier partner, they could scarcely have had a better. Another very fine Australian pair was R. V. Thomas and Pat O'Hara Wood, who won the Championship in 1919.

In this combination Thomas made the openings, and O'Hara Wood put on the artistic finishing touches.

The only French pair to win the Doubles Championship, Gobert and Decugis, were quite capable of playing a magnificent game if they did not "come unstuck": Decugis' smash was as decisive a stroke as any lawn-tennis player ever produced. Although I have often been told that, to anyone conversant with continental lawn tennis, the Frenchmen's great match against Rahe and Kleinschroth at Wimbledon was nothing very remarkable, I thought at the time it was the most brilliant doubles I ever saw on the Centre Court, and I unrepentantly think so still. It was every bit as fast a game as any modern doubles, played ten years before the gospel of speed was preached, or at any rate practised, and it certainly opened the eyes of most people who witnessed it to the possibilities of doubles play.

The first American pair to make any real splash over here were Beals Wright and Holcombe Ward, and a very good pair they were—the best American "pair," indeed, until the American Davis Cup team of 1920 came over. That team contained a man whom I rate very highly as a doubles player in C. S. Garland, who, partnered by R. N. Williams, beat the American "first strings" Tilden and Johnston, and won an exceedingly well-deserved victory in the Championship. Parke and Kingscote were a better pair than they looked to be; they lacked a finishing touch. Lycett and Woosnam are the present holders of the Doubles Championship. Lycett is a long way the best doubles player in this country, and as good as any anywhere; Woosnam has youth and tremendous activity: playing in good company in America in 1921 has improved his play all round.

But besides all these players who have made history as "pairs," there are many others whose play in doubles may well be taken as a model; players to whom fate has perhaps been unkind in not allowing them to find their true partner and settle down into a pair whose names should be on the championship roll. W. A. Ingram is one of these, F. M. B. Fisher (also a fine singles player) is another. Ingram is a powerful and always steady player, with a great knowledge of the game, and the ability to put that knowledge into execution. He is especially good at "down-the-middle" play, either when serving or in the subsequent play of the rally. Fisher's varied armoury of volleys and great physical strength are his chief assets; but his service is also a powerful and disconcerting weapon. But the best of all, in my opinion, is S. N. Doust, mainly owing to his extraordinary command of the "glance" volley. Not normally a hard hitter, though he can hit hard enough if it serves his purpose, Doust, more than any player I have seen, has the power of reducing his opponents to demoralisation by the extraordinarily "square" angle at which he deflects the ball when volleying, playing his shots across the court time after time almost parallel with the net, first one side and then the other, so that his opponents are driven far outside the side-lines in their efforts to retrieve and return his shots. Often enough Doust has a court quite empty of opponents to play his final volley into, each of them having been forced out on his respective side, and forced out so near the net that neither has any chance of getting back to deal with the final volley that goes to the middle of the base-line. This power alone would stamp Doust as a very great doubles player, but he is well armed at all other points of the game, except that his service is not

of the devastating type. And of all players he is probably the cheeriest. If I still played lawn tennis, and if I had the choice of any player, past or present, for a partner in doubles I would give hardly anybody besides Doubt a second thought.



## MIXED DOUBLES



## CHAPTER X

### MIXED DOUBLES

No form of the game has altered more in the last few years than the Mixed Double. This alteration is solely due to the increase in the number of competent lady volleyers; and I think it may fairly be said that this increase would have been much slower in coming if it had not been for the example of Mlle. Lenglen, who fired the imagination of English girl players, on her first appearance at Wimbledon in 1919, to a far greater extent than any lady volleyer had ever done before.

It is rather curious that this should have been the case, for Mrs. Larcombe had for years been demonstrating the possibilities of perfection in volleying for women players; and Mrs. Sterry, Mrs. McNair, Miss Ryan, Mrs. Tuckey, Mrs. Lamplough and a few others were almost as good. Their example, however, was admired but not followed. It needed Mlle. Lenglen to convince other girls that they, too, must learn to volley. It may also be doubted whether the more general adoption of volleying by ladies, in spite of Mlle. Lenglen's example, would have advanced so rapidly if the field had not been to some extent prepared for the seed by the War, during which many girls found their only relaxation from war-work of various kinds in an hour or two's lawn tennis; and, seldom having men to play with or against, took the opportunity of learning how to volley when opposed



by players of their own sex, against whom, being naturally less powerful than men, failure was less frequent. And, with ladies, failure to bring off a volley seems to be more deterrent than with men; they are more apt to say, "Oh, I can't do it!—it's no use my trying!"

In any case, there are far more good lady volleyers since the War than there were before. Some of the best of the new-comers are the Misses McKane, Mrs. Covell (formerly Miss P. Howkins), Miss D. C. Shepherd (now Mrs. Barron) and Miss E. Harvey among English players, while Mrs. Peacock, home from India, is worthy of a very high place. All these have helped to change the character of mixed doubles, and to pave the way for its eventual alteration from a game in which the man rushed about at the net and volleyed everything he could, and the lady, on the base-line, covered the whole of the back of the court, into a game in which the partners use the "parallel formation" and both of them get to the net as soon as possible, just as in a men's double. J. C. Parke and Mrs. Larcombe, if not the actual originators of the "parallel formation" in mixed doubles, were at any rate the most successful exponents of it before the War; since 1919 R. Lycett and Miss Ryan have proved an almost invincible pair, having, I think, only once been beaten—by G. L. Patterson and Mlle. Lenglen at Wimbledon in 1920.

Although the "parallel formation" in mixed doubles is undoubtedly the best formation for the purposes of winning, I do not, personally, look forward to the day when it shall have become universal. When this happens mixed doubles will, I think, lose a great deal of their interest to the spectator, because in most cases

they will be too much like a men's double without its speed of stroke; and because lobbing, which is always dull work to the looker-on, will necessarily be more and more resorted to with the object of driving the man at the net away to the back of the court in order to cover lobs over his partner's head. The older form of the mixed double was always exciting to watch; and I am by no means sure that it was not also more exciting to play, too. The precision with which such players as Mrs. Lambert Chambers, Mrs. Geen, Mrs. Parton, Miss A. M. Morton, Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Beamish, Mrs. Satterthwaite, Miss Holman, and many another kept (and keep) the ball away from the man at the net bordered on the miraculous. And the best pairs in the older formation can still beat all but the very best of the new. Even Tilden's bagful of Championships will scarcely make him forget a mixed double he played in 1921 at Wimbledon, when he and Mrs. Mallory only just scraped home at 8/6 in the final set against Mavrogordato and Mrs. Parton. "Some match, that!" he looked in at my tent to exclaim, on his way to the dressing-room. "I lost *five* of my service-games!—never did that in a mixed before!" Mrs. Parton certainly must have given him the surprise of his life!

But to regret the passing of the old-fashioned mixed doubles is of no practical value. It is bound to be driven out by the "both-up" game. When this formation becomes general, the man will have a great deal more to do than in former days, because, instead of being up at the net all the time, and leaving lobs and everything else that passes him to his partner at the back of the court, he will in future have to look after most of the lobs himself—those over his partner's head as well as

those over his own. There will, of course, not be many passing drives to deal with, if his partner is a competent volleyer, but the lobs will give him a lot of running about, if the opposing pair have got their wits about them. Apart from looking after his partner's lobs as well as his own, the man's work will be much the same as in a men's double, with the advantage that nearly always one of his opponents will be weaker than the other, and so give him a target. The lady, on the other hand, will have less to do than formerly; she will be at the net both when her partner is serving and when he is being served to; and will get there as quickly as she can when she herself is serving and after she has returned her opponents' service. Generally, the man should play in the left court, because that will give his partner more forehand shots to play, and because, as I said just now, he will have to tackle the lobs. When the lady is serving to her lady opponent the service down the middle of the court to her backhand is the most paying; to her man opponent she should serve as near to the side-line of the left court as she can. When receiving the man's service, especially if he gets to the net very quickly, a high lob over his partner's head is the best, and often the only possible return. In which case, be sure to lob deep. If your man opponent has to be perpetually stopping his run in to go and cover his partner's base-line, that run in will become half-hearted, and then you may get a chance to play a shot across him, or a drop-shot at his feet.

Mixed doubles have always been a very popular form of the game in this country, both with players and spectators. Their latest form is interesting; but they have probably not yet reached finality of development,

which will depend almost entirely on whether the present apparent intention of all girl players to become volleyers persists or not; and, further, on their ability to improve the general speed and strength of their game to anything approximating to the general run of men's play.



## TOURNAMENTS



## CHAPTER XI

### TOURNAMENTS

COMPETITION being the spice of life, it is not to be wondered at that the institution of lawn-tennis tournaments began almost as soon as the game itself started. That was an undemocratic age; and the early tournaments were almost as much social functions as a means for discovering the relative form of players. There were few games or sports in those days suitable for open competition. Croquet was one of them; archery was another. But both of these were slow in comparison to the new game; they had infinitely more interest to the player than to the spectator; they lacked the dramatic effect, the continuous movement; they had very little element of excitement; in a word, they were not "spectacular." Now lawn tennis, when well played, is as spectacular a game as anyone could want to see: even when bad, it sometimes has a curious appeal to those who, being good players themselves, would not appear likely to take the faintest interest in inferior play. Yet I know one very good player who seldom leaves a tournament ground till the last match of the day is out of court; I have seen him, with the shades of evening fallen, still keenly watching the final struggles, on a remote court, of a couple of 30·2 pairs in a ladies' handicap doubles! Perhaps he is an exception; but anyway, tournament play does contain the elements



which appeal so strongly to the national "sporting" instinct, both to those who play and those who look on.

Naturally, in the early days, when the devotees of lawn tennis, though enthusiastic, were few, tournaments also were few in number and very much smaller in size than they are to-day. Only a very few of the biggest of them extended over a full week; nearly all were begun and finished in three days. Entrance fees were much higher—half-a-guinea being the normal entry fee for any event—and prizes much more valuable. A tournament seldom contained more than five or six events at most—level events consisting of a men's singles, a ladies' singles, a men's doubles, and a mixed doubles; with, for handicap events, a men's singles (always) and a ladies' singles (generally). Doubles handicaps did not find a place on programmes, at any rate at all generally, till the late 'eighties.

The courts on which tournaments were played were often badly laid and worse looked after: I sometimes wonder what people who grumble about the courts at present-day tournaments would have said if they had been called upon to play on some of the courts provided in the early days! But the old players did not mind these little inconveniences—indeed, they hardly noticed them. As a proof of this assertion I recall the case of a tournament where I played many times in the 'eighties—Edgbaston. After my tournament days were over, I never revisited the ground again until last summer, when I went there as Referee of the meeting—an absence of about thirty years. The place seemed familiar, and yet strangely changed. And the change was that the ground, which has quite a steep fall from the top of the hill to the bottom, had in the interval been levelled out into several "wells" of courts, four to each terrace.

It seemed almost inconceivable, that, in my playing days, there had been no levelling at all, and that the Renshaws, and most of the other best players of that time, had fought out their matches on courts of which the bottom side-line must have been some eighteen inches lower than the top. But so it was! We must have been very unsophisticated in those days, for I never remember being conscious of any marked fall in the ground when playing in a tournament there, nor of any grumbling on that account from even the best players of the day. To-day even the worst would volubly protest! Last year I heard courts with a much smaller "fall" than the old Edgbaston courts disgustingly referred to as "The Alps!"

But except for the increase in size, the general improvement in conditions, and the higher standard of play, there is nothing very much to differentiate the main features of the tournament of to-day from the tournaments of twenty or thirty years ago. To the player there is still the same thrill of excitement, on opening the first day's programme, to find who else has entered, and to study the "draw" in order to calculate his chances of getting through as far as the semi-final of an open event or two; to see on what mark he has been put in the handicap events, and—quite as important and interesting—what mark the handicapper has allotted to other players with whom the competitor is acquainted; to discover (in the case of a player who has entered "wanting partners") what partners have been given to him, and, if they are complete strangers to him, what sort of players they may be. There is, as soon as play begins, the interest of meeting new players; of trying to discover their weak points; of unexpected success (or, it must be admitted, equally unexpected failure).

For some there is the joy of being "still in everything" as the tournament draws on through the week; for others, the sad realisation that the fates have gone against them, and that another tournament is finished, so far as they are concerned. And, in the intervals between their own matches, there are always good players to be watched and studied; for, though there is more to be learnt by playing than by looking on, yet the intelligent spectator of good play is sure to pick up some wrinkle or other, by studying the tactics, the strokes, or the foot-work of those who are better than himself.

Although tournament players are nowadays in a small minority compared with the total number of people who play lawn tennis, they and their doings, being in the public eye, command a great deal of attention; and it is, or has been up to the present time, in the pursuit of their interests that the Lawn Tennis Association has found the bulk of its work to lie. Its Regulations for the Management of Prize Meetings are a model of what such regulations should be, and its further "Recommendations" in the interests of tournament players are so sound that most tournament committees act wisely in adopting them. It is right that tournaments should occupy much of the attention of the ruling body of the game; for it is almost entirely by means of tournament play that young players improve their form, because it is only in open competition that they have the chance of encountering stronger players.

Tournaments have always been popular, and nowadays there is certainly no lack of them during the summer months. From the middle of May to nearly the end of September there is scarcely a week when there are not three or four tournaments in different parts of

the country, and in the holiday months there are generally ten or more every week. All these are played on grass courts; but in April and October there are a few hard-court tournaments, and these are certain to increase in number as the hard court comes into more general use.

Nearly all tournaments include in their programmes both competitions on level terms and handicap competitions, thus catering for both strong and weak players—the “crack” and the “rabbit.” Of these, while the “crack” naturally carries off the most prizes, I am by no means sure that the “rabbit” doesn’t get the most fun. The “cracks” have their reputation to keep up; they must play up to their form: the “rabbits” have no form to play up to; and losing a match, even when they hoped and expected to win it, exercises no permanently depressing influence upon them. And if they *should* happen to win a prize in a handicap event, they are happy for weeks afterwards. It is only natural that, when prizes very rarely fall to a player, he should be far more delighted at winning one than a “crack” player, who may reasonably feel a little disappointed if he does not collect one or two at most of the tournaments he plays in.

But, as a matter of fact, prizes are a very secondary consideration to either the good or the bad players. The two reasons why they go in for tournaments are to improve their play and to have a jolly week. The former consideration some of them achieve, if they get plenty of tournament play; the latter nearly all players appear to obtain, even when bad weather makes the spectator wonder what possible enjoyment the players can be extracting from their game. If it were not for the opportunities which tournaments afford for really strenuous play, lawn tennis might never have been

much more than the "garden-party game" which its detractors so long alleged it to be.

The grass-court tournament season in England divides itself into two parts, the dividing line between them being the Championships Meeting at Wimbledon at the end of June. Both before the grass-court season begins and after it closes there are several hard-court meetings in the London district, and these are increasing every year in numbers and in popularity. But in April and October, the months available for them, the weather is apt to be chilly and uncertain, and it is not till the warm weather of May opens the grass courts that the tournament fever really becomes epidemic. During the first month or six weeks of the season most of the chief tournaments are held in or near London, and serve to give an indication of the form of those who may hope to do well at Wimbledon. At Surbiton, Chiswick Park, Gipsy, Beckenham, Queen's Club, and Roehampton, the pick of the home players are generally to be found competing, though some of them prefer the comparative calm of some of the country meetings which are going on about the same time, such as Bristol, Malvern, and the Northern Championships—a very old-established and popular tournament held at Liverpool and Manchester in alternate years—to the huge entries of the London tournaments and the "rush" which playing in them involves.

But all of these tournaments are in the nature of rehearsals for Wimbledon: the form shown in them is discussed with a view to whether it will be repeated or reversed in the Championships; and as often as not their chief interest to the spectator lies in the first appearance of notable foreign or overseas competitors who have come to this country a few weeks before Wimbledon to

acclimatise themselves, to "get their eye in," and to accustom themselves to the way in which tournaments are conducted in England. Interest in them and their doings increases every week until the "Wimbledon fortnight" is reached. Then the excitement culminates in a sort of orgy of lawn tennis, when the vast crowds who make the All England Club their Mecca have the opportunity of witnessing the best players of all nationalities competing, day after day, for the oldest of all Championships in the game. No other Championship Meeting in the world attracts so cosmopolitan an entry : not even the American Championship, which at the present time probably provides a higher standard of play on account of the strength of its home players, can vie with Wimbledon in its attractiveness to players outside its own country. And this is not in the least due to the fact that the "Grass Court Championships of the World" are played for at Wimbledon; if they had never been allotted to this country, the attraction of playing in a tournament with so glorious a history would still be the same. Just as no golfer is content until he has paid at least one visit to St. Andrews, so no lawn-tennis player who has reached any eminence in his own country really feels all his ambitions satisfied until his name has appeared in the Championship lists at the headquarters of the home of the game. And from whatever nation the Champion of the year may come, I do not doubt that this attraction will persist, even when the old ground, with its historic "Centre Court," is no more, and the Championships are fought out on the new courts now approaching completion in more commodious surroundings a mile or two nearer London in Wimbledon Park.

With the end of the "Wimbledon fortnight" the

great question of the year is settled, and the "holiday" tournaments begin, continuing for nearly three months till the grass-court season winds up with the gigantic tournament in the Devonshire Park at Eastbourne—the final "gathering of the clans." There is hardly a seaside place of any size or importance which does not hold a tournament as one of the attractions which it offers to holiday-makers; and, besides these, there are numerous meetings at inland towns. Last year (1921) there were fifty-nine open tournaments on the list for July, and fifty for August; so that the enthusiast, whatever his form may be, has no lack of opportunity for gratifying his desire for competition and improvement. And it often happens that "crack" players show better form in the holiday tournaments than in the pre-Wimbledon meetings, for the very reason that, Wimbledon and the Championships being irrevocably past, they can play with a sense of greater freedom and less responsibility: neither victory nor defeat assumes such large proportions in their minds, because each match is a thing to itself and not regarded, either by the players or the Press, as a sign-post to what may be going to happen later. To the indifferent player, on the other hand, this particular consideration is of no importance; but the "atmosphere" of the holiday tournaments, to players of all classes, certainly seems much less tense, and for that reason they really get much more enjoyment out of the game when Wimbledon is over and done with for the year.

There are few pleasanter ways of spending a month's holiday in the summer than going on a well-planned little tour of tournaments. The constant excitement of competition, the meeting with previously unknown opponents, and the splendid exercise obtained, combine

to make such a tour not only enjoyable in itself but health-giving for months afterwards. To the novice, especially, such an experience must prove of value, and give him a better chance of knocking three- or four-sixths off his handicap than a whole season's play at his club, where he is continually meeting the same players in matches the result of which is always a foregone conclusion. He will, moreover, have the opportunity of improving not only by playing himself, but by watching better players; and if he should have the good fortune to have to play against a really good player he ought to learn more during the half-hour or so that their match lasts than he could by any other means.

And now that there are so many players new to tournaments, a few words of advice to them may not be out of place, to conclude this chapter. To the novice, then, I would say: "Take plenty of changes of clothes with you, for all summers are not like the summer of 1921, and rain *has* been known to fall at tournaments! Take three or four rackets, one of which at least you won't mind using in wet weather, and half a dozen extra pairs of coarse worsted socks to wear over your shoes on a muddy or slippery court—they will give you a better foothold than any other device, and may make all the difference between winning and losing a match. Be on the ground at the advertised time for play, and find out at once from the Referee when you will be wanted. The Referee is there to look after your interests, and he will be quite willing to arrange the times of your matches to suit you as far as he can, so long as he can do so without interfering with the general progress of the tournament. Never go off the ground without finding out when you will be wanted for your next match, and be back again, and ready to play, at that time. (If you



will read the next chapter, on Tournament Management, carefully, many things that may seem unreasonable to you in the way a tournament is run will be found to have a reason.) You will have umpires provided for your matches: *never* question their decisions on a point of fact, even though you may be sure they are wrong. But, if you have any doubt as to an umpire's decision on a point of law, take it to the Referee—that is<sup>c</sup> one of the things he is there for. Learn how to umpire a match yourself; for many tournaments now make it a condition of entry that all competitors must, if requested, umpire one match a day. If you are not a good umpire yourself, try to become one—it is not difficult. And, until you do, remember that complaints about the bad umpiring of other people is not justified on your part. Keep warm between your matches. Don't watch other matches too closely or too long, especially just before you are due to play yourself; it will put your eye out. When you are playing a match, don't let bad bounds, or bad decisions, or "bad luck" of any kind worry you and put you off your game; just keep on playing each shot as it comes as well as you can, and play your hardest right up to the last stroke of the match, win or lose. Not letting things worry you is just a matter of strength of will; if you have that strength of will, you have one of the greatest assets a tournament player can possibly possess—the "match-playing temperament."

# **TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT**



## CHAPTER XII

### TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT

A TOURNAMENT in fine weather is always a jolly affair, for losers as well as winners, for bad players as well as good. Most of them get a good deal of fun out of their week's play; the "grouzers" are not numerous, and they would be even fewer than they are if they could distract their minds for a moment from their own grievances to reflect, not on the things that are lacking to their comfort and enjoyment, but on the immense amount of trouble that is being taken by the tournament committee to make things as enjoyable as possible for them. The work that the hon. sec. of a tournament, and his committee, have to get through, not only during the tournament week itself, but for weeks beforehand, is, I am sure, not in the least recognised by players generally. If it were, I cannot see how anyone could have the face to grumble at all. Let them think of the care involved in the preparation of the courts—often enough upon some ground almost improvised for the occasion, such as a cricket-ground. At one such tournament which I know well, I have gone on to the ground on the day before the tournament started, to find a dozen or more committee-men themselves engaged on the mowing and marking out of some fifteen to twenty courts. And probably not one of them would be himself a competitor in the forthcoming meeting;

they would be doing all this work solely to provide a jolly week for numbers of players personally unknown to them, whose enjoyment of the result of their labours would be their sole reward. Let them think, too, of the work of the hon. sec., extending back over long months in getting his tournament committee together; in obtaining his "date" from the Tournaments Committee of the L.T.A.—often no simple matter; in drafting his prospectus and entry-form, and distributing it to likely competitors; in arranging for the supply of the "material" of his tournament—balls, nets, and posts, stop-netting, stands (in many cases), umpires' chairs, scoring-blocks, etc.; in obtaining ball-boys; in arranging proper dressing accommodation for competitors; in making catering arrangements; in providing tents for them to have their lunch and tea in, or to "lounge" in when not playing themselves, or desiring to see others play. All these are in the nature of preliminary arrangements made weeks or months before the date of the tournament. But the hon. sec.'s work is only just begun when all these things are done. In the week before the tournament his activities are redoubled; entries begin to come in, all of which have to be carefully booked up and marked as to whether the entry-fees are paid or have still to be collected; players want partners found for them, and write long letters (which have to be answered) requiring all sorts of information as to how to get to the ground, and which is the best hotel, and even ask the hon. sec. to find rooms for them, which *must* be near the station *and* close to the ground! Some cannot possibly come till Tuesday; others *must* be absent on Thursday; others again are in business in the morning and so cannot play till the afternoon on any day of the meeting. Of these

irregulars, if the hon. sec. is kind-hearted, he has to make a list for the information of the Referee so that, if possible, they shall not be called upon to play at the times when they wish to be absent. Then there are receipts and admission tickets to be sent out to all those who have entered; and entry-forms to be filled up for those who enter by letter, wire, or telephone; there is the arrangement of all entry-forms in alphabetical order so as to be ready for the handicapper when he arrives, or often, if he is not coming himself to referee the tournament, to be sent half across England to him for handicapping and return. Then there is the "pairing-up" of people who want partners; and the "draw" of the various events; the getting of the draw off to the printers, so that the programme may be ready at the start of play on the first day of the tournament, at any rate so far as the level events are concerned. And the whole of this entirely unremunerated work before the tournament can even start! When it does start, the hon. sec's activities are scarcely lessened, although the actual "running" of the tournament is handed over to the Referee, who is responsible for bringing the meeting to a conclusion in the time allotted for its completion. But apart from the actual management of the meeting, the hon. sec. has still plenty to do, in welcoming players who have been to his tournament in previous years, and in making the acquaintance of new ones; in helping everyone to feel at home; in seeing, generally through two or three committee-men appointed for that purpose, that the players sent on to court by the Referee get there quickly, with their umpire, and with ball-boys and balls for their match; and in exercising a general benevolent supervision over everything that goes on on the ground. The right kind of man can do—and does—

wonders in all these ways; it often astounds me how they get through their apparently never-ending work, and how, in many cases, they seem to prefer adding the jobs of other people to their own. But, at a really big tournament, one man, be he never so energetic, cannot do everything himself, and the wise hon. sec. will be an organiser good enough to obtain, and rely upon, the help of a treasurer to deal solely with the financial details of the tournament, such as collecting the competitors' entrance-fees and giving them receipts for them; giving out the prize-orders at the end of the tournament; taking over the stand-money and gate-money at the end of each day of the meeting, and dealing with the whole of the accounts. Other helpers should include at least two committee-men who will make it their business to be on duty the whole of the day to put matches into court as the Referee directs; that is to say, collect the players and find an umpire for their match: and one committee-man to be in sole control of the ball-boys; to receive and check the used balls as they are brought in after the match; to send the ball-boys back to their court as soon as another match is sent there, with the appropriate balls for playing, and so to organise the boys that all may get a fair interval for lunch, either together or in turn, about the middle of the day. To all these various officials tournament players really owe a much greater debt than they are, for the most part, conscious of; if it were not for the self-sacrificing and voluntary work of the hon. secs. of tournaments and their helpers, there would be very few tournaments indeed for the enjoyment and improvement of lawn-tennis players.

I have said above that, at the start of a tournament, the actual running of it is handed over to the Referee.

Nearly all the large tournaments, and a great many of the smaller ones, employ professional Referees to manage their tournaments. There are, of course, amateur Referees, such, for example, as Mr. Clement Pflaum and Mr. W. C. Bersey, who are every bit as good at their work as any professional Referee; but they generally only officiate at tournaments in which they have a personal interest, and very lucky those tournaments are to be able to avail themselves of their services. Mr. Pflaum, for instance, has for many years steered through to a successful conclusion the Ilkley tournament—a meeting than which only one or two in the whole country are larger or more difficult to manage; and Mr. Bersey's careful attention to detail ensures the smooth running of his tournaments. The small band of professional Referees in this country includes H. S. Scrivener, D. R. Larcombe (on the rare occasions when he can leave his work at Roehampton), C. Marriott, and myself, all of whom have been engaged in this work for a considerable number of years; while among later comers to the ranks are to be numbered E. U. Story, Hamilton Price, and A. S. Maples. Abroad, G. M. Simond, who at one time used to manage some of the English tournaments, is much the best-known and most capable of Referees in the continental tournaments.

I suppose all of us try to follow in the footsteps of the first and greatest of all Referees, the late Bonham Carter Eveleigh, who began refereeing as soon as tournaments began, and was the most familiar and popular figure in the lawn-tennis world until his death in 1910. Under his direction tournaments grew from very small beginnings into meetings demanding an amount of work and management to carry through successfully which only those who have succeeded him are able to appre-



ciate. He brought to his work the qualities—some of which at least every Referee must possess—of a perfect impartiality, great strength of will, a true sporting spirit, an imperturbable temper, a keen sense of humour, admirable tact, enormous energy, and a capacity for prolonged hard work. He needed them : and he would have needed them still more in the present day, when tournaments are double and treble the size they used to be. His successors cannot hope to rival him in the possession of so many desirable characteristics ; but all of us, I think, keep his memory before us as a model of what a Referee should be.

Although all Referees do not run their tournaments on identical lines, there are one or two broad principles on which all of them must necessarily act in order to get their tournaments through satisfactorily to the committees who employ them and to the competitors who are under their charge. Every Referee, for example, recognises the importance of getting the level events, and especially the two level singles for men and ladies respectively, well forward early in the week ; so that, whatever happens through rain or other unfavourable circumstances to the handicap events, the level events may be pretty sure of being finished. This is necessary, because, especially in the case of the singles, the level events are frequently competitions for a County or District Championship, or for a Challenge Cup which has to be won, perhaps, three times in succession or in all before becoming the property of the winner. I always make a point of starting a tournament with the level singles, with this particular end in view. As soon as I see from the arrival-sheet, which all competitors are asked to sign as soon as they reach the ground, that two players who have been drawn against each

other in the level singles are both present, I put them on to play that match at once, before they play in any other event. The larger the entry for a level singles is, the more necessary it is to pursue this course; otherwise the event gets behindhand. The object I aim at, in a tournament which extends over a full week, as nearly all meetings do nowadays, is to reduce the competitors in the two level singles to eight players in each by Wednesday night, irrespective of what the original number may have been; and nowadays it is anything from thirty up to over a hundred. The reason for reducing the competitors to eight in these events is to ensure that (given fine weather) no player shall have more than one level single a day to play after Wednesday. On Thursday the eight are reduced to four; on Friday the four to two; and the two survivors fight out the final on Saturday. This reduction to eight is, of course, quite a simple matter when the entry is small in number—anything from twenty to forty players; in such a case I often go further than the last eight by the Wednesday night, sometimes getting right down to the last four, which gives me a whole day in hand, in case it should turn wet; sometimes only taking into the last four those players who are heavily engaged in other events, so that they will be able to devote the whole of Thursday to doubles of various kinds. But with a big entry—anything over sixty-four players, and entries of this size have not been at all uncommon during the last two years—it becomes a matter demanding a considerable amount of management to reduce the entry to the required number. This is especially the case when some of the matches in the very first round fail to get played on the first day, owing to the absence of some of the competitors; for it means that the

absentees (or their conquerors) will only have two days instead of three in which to play four rounds of level singles, besides doubles or other matches in which they may be required. Still, that is their own look-out, and I often have to point out, in these circumstances, to a competitor who complains of being too hard worked, that he *had* his rest on the Monday!

The reasons for reducing the competitors in level singles to eight before the Thursday of a tournament has been given above, but it is quite possible that the necessity for reaching that exact number may not be obvious. Does it make much difference if there are nine or ten players left in instead of eight? Well, if there are nine or ten left in, some one or two players will have more than one single to play on one day before the end of the meeting, and such a player, or players, will be to that extent disadvantaged by the extra work they will have to do as against a man they may meet later who has only had one single out of him. This leads me to the great secret of tournament management, so far as getting the tournament through is concerned. This is, *to keep all the events*—not only the level singles—as “flat” as possible. By “flat” I mean that the day’s printed programme should show, in the case of most of the competitions, that all the players or pairs in any particular event have reached the same stage in it. When this is so, the Referee has the opportunity, if he so desires, of playing off the whole of the matches in the next round of that event simultaneously, and so advancing it a full stage in the course of about an hour’s play. It is therefore important to get matches in the first and second rounds of any event played as soon as possible; the progress of an event in which, say, thirty-two players are engaged is not helped by pushing one player

along till he reaches the semi-final while in the same half of the draw there is a match in the first round still unplayed. And, indeed, to run an event in such a way would not be fair either to the man who is pushed forward or to the opponent who eventually comes through to him. The former will not have had a single to play at all for two or possibly three days, and may feel the lack of singles practice when he comes to play his semi-final; the latter, on the other hand, will probably have had too much to do in too short a time, and be tired or stale when he meets him. I can give no better advice to anybody who is called upon to run a tournament than to keep his events "flat"—not to have "holes" in them, if it can possibly be avoided; and if there should be one or two matches left to complete a full round at the end of a day's play, to put those matches on as early as possible the following morning, so as to have the chance of playing a full round of the event in the afternoon. This advice is all the more important in these days of huge entries, when every tournament is a gamble against the weather. After the loss of perhaps half a day's play through rain, a deep "hole" in an important event is almost enough to reduce a tournament manager to despair.

Since singles, whether level or handicap, are in the majority of cases more exhausting than doubles, it is a good plan to get as many singles as possible played on the first two or three days of the tournament, so that, as indicated above, players shall have as few singles as possible left to play in the later stages of the meeting, when the winning or losing of a match is becoming of more vital importance. When I am running a tournament, therefore, I concentrate almost entirely upon singles, both level and handicap, on the first two days of

the meeting, only playing such level doubles as may be available, and not touching the doubles handicaps at all, unless for any special reason it is desirable to play some particular match in them, either for the purpose of pushing on (or out!) some prominent player who is likely to go a long way in the level events, or to give a game to some player, who, not having entered for the singles, would not otherwise get one. There is another good reason for starting with singles, and that is the very simple and obvious one that it is easier to get hold of two players than four. And on that account a Referee can get his courts filled more quickly if he starts with singles than with doubles. Which brings me to another very vital point in tournament management—*Fill your courts as soon as you can, and keep them full.* Empty courts mean waste of time, and there is no time to waste in present-day tournaments if they are to be finished without divisions of prizes or abandonment of events. It makes all the difference in the world to get a really good start to a tournament—to have all the courts in play within a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes of the time advertised for the beginning of play on the first day. Besides the practical value of doing so, there is also the moral effect on late comers. If they arrive on the ground and see only half a dozen matches going on and nine or ten courts empty, they get the idea that there is “no hurry” and that it does not matter that they are rather late. But if they see the whole ground full of matches, they invariably hurry up to get “changed” and sometimes even wonder whether they have been already called upon to play and scratched for absence. A good start is half the battle, from the Referee’s point of view: it gives everybody the impression that the day’s play has really got going at the

time when it was supposed to get going, and that it is incumbent on everyone who is not already playing to be ready to fill the courts as soon as they fall empty.

Having devoted the first day of the tournament to singles, my usual plan is to continue with them on the second day until they have been got "into shape," *i. e.* advanced so far that no player will have more than two level singles left to play on Wednesday in order to reach the last eight, and, so far as possible, only one. When this stage is reached I begin to tackle the level doubles, of which there are now three at nearly all meetings—men's, ladies', and mixed. Of these the largest in point of number of entries is practically always the mixed doubles. It is a good plan to start with the biggest event first, so I usually try to get at any rate all the matches in the first round of a big mixed, and as many as possible in the second, played on the Tuesday afternoon. In a level mixed doubles of forty pairs, for example, there will be eight matches in the first round; if I can get these eight matches, and perhaps a dozen matches in the second round played on Tuesday, there are only nineteen matches left to be played in that event, which reduces it at once to probably the smallest instead of the largest of the level doubles. (These are all small figures for tournaments of to-day; I have only selected them for ease of demonstration; the same principles apply, with greater force, to larger figures.) This being so, I do not pay much attention to the mixed on Wednesday, probably only just bringing the event up so as to be mainly "flat" with one or two matches played in the next round, so as, if possible, to advance the probable finalists a stage. But I concentrate on the men's doubles and ladies' on Wednesday, treating them in the same way as the mixed, and

playing, as nearly as I can, to the end of the second round in each of them. This brings me to another important point in tournament management—*Concentrate on one event at a time*. It is no use trying to play all three sorts of doubles simultaneously, because if you do you will find that a player whom you want to put on in the mixed is already engaged in a men's or ladies' double, or *vice versa*. This dealing with one event at a time is even more important now than it used to be, because entries for all level events are so much larger than they were; and when you are dealing with a large event, you must have *all* the players in that event available for play, because otherwise one or two matches will be left unplayed, and the undesirable "holes" appear on the programme.

By Wednesday night, therefore, if all has gone well, the two level singles should be in the last eight and there should not be more than sixteen pairs left in any of the level doubles, all of which should, indeed, be approximating to the "last eight," though it is very seldom indeed that they can actually be brought as far as that stage. Meanwhile, the handicap singles have also been steadily advancing, and should have reached about the same stage as the level doubles. The handicap doubles—the biggest events of the whole tournament—are, so far, almost untouched. I try, if possible, to reduce a tournament, whatever its original size, so far on the first three days that there are not more than 200 to 230 matches left for the last three days. Of these there will be about fifty in the five level events; perhaps twenty-five to thirty, certainly not more, in the handicap singles; and about 140 in the three doubles handicaps. With fine weather, this ought to mean a comfortable finish without undue exertion and consequent over-tiredness for any-

body. The tournament has, meanwhile, undergone a great change in *personnel*. Nearly all the weak players will be out of the level events—certainly out of the singles—before Thursday; and therefore they will be free, and at the Referee's disposal for their handicap doubles thereafter, without being still wanted to play for level events. Some of the strong players may still be "alive" in two or three of their level events and in one at least of the handicaps; but, roughly speaking, the *personnel* of the tournament is now pretty well divided into those who are only in the level events or only in the handicap events.

On Thursday, then, there are comparatively few matches in the level events; the players in the singles come down from eight to four, and the three doubles are all brought along to the last eight, at least, and as much further as possible; the men's and ladies' doubles ought to reach the last four, with luck. But there will not be more than twenty-five or thirty matches at most played in all the five level events put together, on Thursday; the courts will be filled with a few handicap singles and crowds of handicap doubles. I should point out that another important reason why handicap doubles cannot get a real start before Thursday is that there are usually no courts to spare for them: all the courts are filled with level event matches which must have priority because of the Championships and Challenge Cups which they carry. But on Thursday the courts are freer. Now in days when entries were comparatively small it did not matter very much which of the doubles handicaps was started first, because, even with rain, there was generally time to get all of them through by the end of the meeting. I usually got as far as I could with men's doubles and ladies' doubles



on Thursday, only playing a few matches in the mixed, and keeping that event mainly for the last two days of the meeting. But nowadays it is a different matter. If the glass is falling and the weather looks doubtful, and, certainly, if there is any rain, the best plan is to start with the mixed doubles on Thursday and get through two full rounds of it, with, if possible, a few matches out in the next round. Then it is in 'shape to be finished, whatever the weather. And this is very desirable, because the mixed doubles handicap is the most popular event of the meeting; and players hate nothing much more than to have this event "scrapped" altogether, or even left unfinished with a division of prizes. If any events have to be scrapped it is much better that they should be the other two doubles handicaps; and, if there is either actual bad weather or a strong probability of it, it is no good to play matches in the men's or ladies' doubles if there is no possibility of getting further than, say, the second round in those events.

The summer of 1921 was so fine that nearly every tournament was finished without the necessity of deleting any event from the programme; but a really wet summer is bound to bring the impossibility of "getting through" tournaments of the present size as vividly before the eyes of tournament players and committees as it has been present to the minds of Referees for some time past. This is, of course, especially the case when a tournament can provide only a small number of courts, perhaps eight or ten. If a day's play is lost through rain at such a tournament, it means that some seventy or eighty matches have not been played which should have been played. And this deficit cannot be caught up with, because there are not enough courts to play

the matches on. That is why bad weather is so much more fatal to a tournament with only a small number of courts than it is to a tournament which has, perhaps, twenty at its disposal. In the latter case there is room for expansion. By this I mean (to take a concrete example): suppose that at each of two tournaments, one of which has ten courts and the other twenty, there is a practically untouched mixed doubles handicap of fifty pairs. After a day's rain, at the second of these tournaments, it is possible to play, at a rush, from thirty-five to forty matches in this one event in a couple of hours, by filling all the courts with it and taking the winners of each match into another round of it as soon as possible. But at the ten-court tournament this cannot be done: a Referee would be lucky to get even twenty matches played in the same time; and the event would probably never have a chance of being finished. The case of the ten-court tournament is even worse than it appears from what I have just said; because in the above conditions, at least three courts at each tournament would be imperatively wanted for matches in level events, and that would reduce the number available at the ten-court tournament for the mixed doubles handicap to seven, whereas the twenty-court tournament would still have seventeen out of its twenty courts available for it. So, on the Thursday, I now generally give the mixed doubles handicap a good start and push it along as far as I can, making it the main feature of the day's play. If Thursday goes well, there should not be more than a hundred matches left to play in the whole tournament; if they can be reduced to between eighty and ninety so much the better.

Now we come to Friday (and the sun still shining!). Friday is the most ticklish day of any tournament, for

all the events must be pushed on as far as possible, up to the final. If all goes well all the level events and the singles handicaps should reach the final stage by Friday night: the doubles handicaps should in no case have more than eight pairs left in, and at least one of these events should be in the final. So far as the level events are concerned, it is sometimes necessary to leave the semi-finals of one event, generally the mixed, over till Saturday morning, when the presence of one competitor in all three of the level events open to him or her would entail so much play on the Friday as to leave them tired out before the all-important final on the Saturday. But I always try to have nothing but finals left for Saturday in the level events; and if a match has to be left over, to leave over also, if possible, the other semi-final in that event, so that not only one but both of the eventual finalists shall have to play a match before the final on Saturday. Of course, it would be ideal to have *all* the events, level and handicap, in the final stage by Friday night, but I have never yet succeeded in accomplishing this feat: it does not often look possible, but, even if it does, something or other generally turns up to prevent it. Still, I hope to bring it off some day, if only once!

The Saturday of a tournament, even though it be a strenuous day for the surviving players, is generally the easiest of the week for the Referee. Only a few semi-finals remain to be played: nearly all the events are in their final stage. There should be seldom more than about twenty to twenty-five matches left to put into court, and these follow one another on about five courts almost without requiring any arranging. The day's programme is seldom at all complicated, and about the only point that arises is, when a lady is in all three

level finals—singles, doubles, and mixed—in which order the doubles shall follow the singles. It is generally advisable to give her the choice of playing her mixed final or her doubles final first. If she has no wishes one way or the other, I usually keep the mixed for the “after-tea” match, as it nearly always provides a popular and spectacular wind-up to the tournament. “Final-Day” arrangements are sometimes also made rather complex if a man happens to be in three level finals, and if the singles or the doubles, or both, are nominally “best-of-five-sets” matches. But at practically all tournaments the Referee is given power, in the Conditions of Play, to change “best-of-five-sets” into “best-of-three-sets” matches; and I should do so if a man were in all three finals, as a possible thirteen sets in a single afternoon is too much for a man to play without such exertion as would make him very tired for his last match, and so spoil the game for his partner and himself.

The main plan on which I run a tournament will now be fairly clear to the reader. And I imagine it to be the plan, with very slight modifications, which all other Referees employ. Its main features, to recapitulate, are :—

1. Fill your courts as soon as you can, and keep them full.
2. Concentrate, mainly, on one event at a time, or upon events which do not clash with one another—*e.g.* men's handicap singles and ladies' level doubles, or *vice versa*.
3. Keep your events as “flat” as possible: getting a match or two played beyond the round you are aiming to complete is all to the good,

but having a match or two *in* that round unplayed may bring much trouble.

4. Get your level events into good shape before starting any of the doubles handicaps.

There remains for explanation the way in which this plan is carried out.

The powers of a Referee are almost autocratic; but it is up to him not to use them in an autocratic way, but so that every player in the tournament, from the best to the worst, may feel that he or she is being treated in exactly the same way and with the same consideration. This, however strong a sense of fairness the Referee possesses, is not always an easy thing to do; and it is difficult because, while the players have only themselves to consider, the Referee has to consider (in addition to the players), the committee, who are his employers, and the public, who pay to see the play. Of course all Referees ought to consider the wishes of the players first, so far as they do not materially hinder the progress of the meeting. Next the wishes of the committee should be regarded by the Referee: last of all the wishes of the public. It is generally not a matter of great difficulty to satisfy the committee; and the public's wishes are practically confined to having the best matches played on the courts of which the seats they have bought command a good view. Now at many, if not at most, tournaments these "gallery" courts are the best on the ground, and there are seldom more than a couple of them. From this fact arises the grumble so often heard from the less prominent players that they "never get a chance to play on the good courts"—that for all their matches they are sent "out in the country." In reality, the "country" courts usually do not differ greatly in

merit from the "gallery" courts; but I suppose it is only human nature for those who never play on the latter to think that they must be infinitely superior. But I always try—and in the earlier stages of a tournament I often have the opportunity—to give as many players as possible at least one match on the "gallery" courts; and it would be easy to do this even more frequently if it were not for the appeals: "Oh! *please* don't put me on Court 1!" made by the large majority of indifferent players—even by those who only an hour before were complaining that they were always "sent out in the country"! From which I conclude that this particular complaint has but little real foundation.

Still, the interests and wishes of players, committee, and spectators have to be recognised and reconciled as far as possible. The Referee must keep this in mind; it is part—and a very important part—of his work, and he must guide his management of the meeting by it.

Each individual Referee has, no doubt, his own methods of carrying out the "plan" of running a tournament detailed above, which is more or less common to all of them. It is very seldom indeed that I have the opportunity of seeing my colleagues at work, and therefore I can only detail my own methods.

These necessarily differ slightly in the several cases of London and country grass-court tournaments, because the former are nominally "afternoon" tournaments, and the latter "whole-day" meetings. The London tournaments, such as Surbiton, Beckenham, Chiswick Park, Queen's, Roehampton, Gipsy, etc., are all held early in the season, and so have the advantage of good light till quite late in the evening, especially with the adoption of "Summer Time." They cater largely for the man who is at business in the City in the

morning, but can get away fairly early in the afternoon to any of the London meetings, which are easily accessible. The country tournaments, on the other hand, are mostly held after Wimbledon, in the holiday months, with most of the competitors staying in the town where the meeting takes place, and so morning play is practicable and the afternoon's play is generally over in good time for dinner. As a matter of fact, London tournaments have now become so congested that most of them make it a condition of entry that ladies will be called on to play some of their matches in the morning. This frees the courts for men's and mixed matches in the afternoon.

But whether the tournament be a London or a country meeting, I aim to reach the ground at least an hour before the advertised time for the start of play on the first day, so that, so far as I am concerned, everything may be absolutely ready for the players as they arrive. On subsequent days to arrive half an hour before the start of play is sufficient, for reasons which will appear later. In my tent I have a large table—an ordinary plain "kitchen" table if I can get it. On this table, on the right hand side, I have some loose sheets of foolscap and a pile of score-books, always at least half a dozen more in number than the total number of courts, because, if I only had as many score-books as courts, I should sometimes be delayed in sending a match into a court owing to the umpire of the match that has just finished there forgetting to bring back his score-book promptly. To the left of the score-books, and on the side of the table nearest to my chair, I have my "Court-Sheet" pinned down with drawing-pins. The "Court-Sheet" is a large sheet of paper divided by vertical and horizontal lines. The spaces between the

horizontal lines are numbered (on the left of the sheet) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc., up to the total number of courts available. At the left of the "Court-Sheet" I cut from the programme and pin out on the table the events on which I am going to concentrate during the day: on the first day, for example, I pin out the two level singles, and all the four handicap singles, presuming the latter to be divided into two classes, both for men and ladies. As to any level doubles I may want to put on late in the day I have a complete spare programme to work from. In the space left on the table above the Court-Sheet I have a clock and a barometer, an ink-pot that will not tip over, a ruler, a tray of pencils, including some which contain red and blue chalks instead of lead, a pair of large scissors, and a good piece of india-rubber. On the right of the pinned-out programme is an empty ball-box for the reception of the score-sheets as they come in. The only other thing which I find absolutely necessary is a large case of cigars and plenty of matches, but these I keep in my pocket, *not* on the table. On a chair at my side sits the megaphone—an invaluable comrade. On another table just outside the tent, I pin down a large sheet of paper headed "Arrivals—Monday," and divided by a vertical line in the middle, one side being headed "Ladies" and the other "Men." To this sheet a pencil on a long piece of string is firmly fastened, so that competitors may be able to sign their names comfortably. At very big tournaments I have two big sheets, or cards, for this purpose, one for men and one for ladies, and divide each card into alphabetical sections, so that competitors can sign in the space containing the initial of their surname. By this means it is far more easily and rapidly ascertained if a competitor has



“signed on” than by searching through seventy or eighty signatures, often rather illegible and of course in no alphabetical order. (It must be remembered that, at the majority of tournaments nowadays, quite a large number of competitors are making their first appearance, and are consequently quite unknown to me by sight; but I soon get to know them.)

Now everything is ready. Competitors are beginning to arrive on the ground, and come to “sign on.” A committee-man, standing by the signing-on table, calls out to me the name of each player as he or she signs, and I put a red tick against their names both in the level singles and in the handicap singles. As soon as a player signs on who is drawn to play in the level singles against a player whose name already has a red tick against it, I tick him off in red too, and tell him, as he goes past my table, to get changed,—that his opponent is on the ground, and I will put their match on at once. The opponent is then called for on the megaphone, and gets changed too, if he has not already done so. I write the score-book ready for them—“Jones *v.* Smith” and the number of the court on which they are to play—hand the book to a committee-man, whose job it is to find umpires and get the players into court, write down on my Court-Sheet “Jones *v.* Smith” in the first space opposite the number of the court to which I am sending the match, put a blue tick on the bracket of that match in the pinned-out draw of the level singles—and the tournament is started. This process is carried on as players arrive until all the courts are full, each match, as it goes into court, of course being entered in its proper place on my Court-Sheet. Preference is of course given to matches in the level singles; but if the

opponent of a player in the handicap singles has arrived, and his opponent in the level singles has not, I often put on the available match in the handicap, and leave the level single for later in the day. Of course it often happens, in such a case, that the missing player in the level event turns up a few minutes after his opponent in that event has gone into court for his handicap match. Then the late arrival either has to wait until his opponent has finished and has had a rest, or goes on to play a handicap single himself, if the man against whom he is drawn in that event is available.

When the courts are all full, I take a sheet of foolscap and note down on it any matches available for the next round of courts. By this time most of the players will be on the ground, so that I have plenty of matches ready as soon as I have courts empty for them. In the case of any of these matches that I particularly want to get into court I write the names of the players in my spare score-books, and range them down the table on my right. "Number 5 finished!" reports a committeeman. I take one of the already written books, add "Court 5" to the names of the players, cross out on my Court-Sheet the names of the players who have just finished there, and enter the names of the two just going in on the Court-Sheet in the next space on the right for that court. Directly the umpire brings in the score-book of the match just finished, I enter the name of the winner and the score on my pinned-out programme, and place the score-sheets in the ball-box, so as to be available for reference if wanted. And so on all through the day, filling each court again as soon as it is empty, till at the close of play, if all has gone well, I have filled every court eight or nine times, or in some cases have

been lucky enough to make a court yield as many as ten matches. At a "whole-day" tournament which has a dozen courts in use, I reckon to get over a hundred matches played in the day, for the first four days of the meeting.

It may appear that a good deal of unnecessary labour is involved in the writing of all these names down upon the Court-Sheet; but, especially when a large number of courts are in use, it is very important to be able to see at a glance exactly what players are in court, so as to avoid any chance of megaphoning for a player for some match I want to put on when he is already in court playing another match. Also the Court-Sheet shows exactly what matches each player has been engaged in during the day, so that I can count up how many he has played when considering whether it would be fair to put him on to play again. It does involve a good deal of labour; but it is worth it.

Play on the following days of the meeting is conducted by the same method, except that generally on the second day of a tournament, and on all subsequent days, I make up a list of matches for the first round in the morning and the first after-lunch round, and put them up on a notice-board. The "10 o'clock list" is posted at the close of play on the previous evening; the "2 o'clock list" just before the luncheon interval. These lists are posted for the convenience of competitors, in that those whose names do not appear on them know that they will not be wanted on the first round of the day, or the afternoon, as the case may be, and need not therefore hurry over their breakfast or lunch. They are, in effect, given half an hour's "law" over the advertised time of starting play. The lists are, also, a convenience to the Referee, because he has

not to wait for both players or pairs in a match to arrive on the ground before he can put that match on, as at the start of a tournament: certain players are notified by the list, and the Referee may reasonably hope that those players will be punctual. They generally are; though of course, in the lawn-tennis world, as in the world outside, people exist who are incapable of punctuality. Still, it is a bad day if the courts are not all full within a quarter of an hour of the advertised time, when a "list" is posted; whereas, if no list is posted, it may very well take half an hour to fill them.

I am often asked why I do not expand this "list" system into a fixed "Order of Play," covering the whole day's matches; so that every player in the tournament would know exactly when he or she would be wanted. My questioners have usually played in continental tournaments, at many of which such an "Order of Play" is used with great success. "If we had a fixed Order of Play at London tournaments," they say, "we shouldn't have to hang about all day." Now to make an Order of Play for a tournament at which there are at the outside six courts, as in the Riviera tournaments, is a simple affair; entries are small, and all the competitors are generally staying in the town where the tournament is being played. To make an Order of Play for a London tournament of fifteen or more courts, with at least fifty per cent. of the players coming from other parts of London and dependent on trains, is a very different matter. Still, it is perfectly possible to make an Order of Play for London or any other tournaments, however large. The reason it is not done is that it does not pay to do so. And it does not pay because the size of the entry at most tournaments in England is so

large that the Referee, in order to get his tournament through in the week, cannot afford to have any of his courts empty for more than a very few minutes on any of the first four days of a meeting. And a fixed Order of Play *must* mean empty courts. Suppose, for example, that fifteen matches have been posted for 2 p.m. on the second day of a tournament, fifteen more for 2.45, and another fifteen for 3.30, and so on. Of the fifteen matches listed for 2 o'clock, a couple will be over in twenty minutes; half a dozen more by 2.30 or 2.35; three perhaps will take just the three-quarters of an hour allotted for them; one or two an hour; one an hour and ten minutes; and in one a player will fail to turn up. Now in this last case, under a fixed Order of Play, no Referee could afford to do anything but scratch the absent competitor, a thing which is scarcely ever necessary in ordinary circumstances. Players ought never to be scratched merely because they are absent—only when their absence is delaying the progress of the tournament. But the result of this particular player's absence is that one court is empty for three-quarters of an hour, for there will be no other match ready for it till 2.45. At least eight or nine other courts will be empty for from ten minutes to twenty-five minutes; and some of the matches fixed for 2.45 will not be able to get on because their courts are not empty by that time. So that, on this one round of matches alone, in the aggregate about three hours' playing-time on the fifteen courts will have been absolutely wasted. A day's play at a London tournament usually lasts about six to six and a half hours; at a country "whole-day" meeting about seven and a half to eight. So, if this wastage continued through the day, as it normally

very nearly would, there would be eighteen to twenty hours wasted each day in a fifteen-courts tournament. That would represent at the very least twenty matches; or a total of eighty for the first four days of a meeting. In other words, nearly a whole day's play. And the result, in most cases, would be that the tournament could not be finished.

The fixed Order of Play system destroys elasticity, and elasticity is an absolute necessity. The fixed Order of Play is bound to keep courts empty; empty courts mean waste of time; time is all-important. All Referees, to do their work successfully, must be opportunists; a single match with an unexpected result may, and very often does, necessitate a complete change of plan. And that change would be impossible under a fixed Order of Play. If all matches took approximately the same time to play, and the result of them could be foreseen with accuracy before they started, and competitors were never late, a fixed Order of Play might have a good chance of success; but I am sure the complaints of those players who now clamour for it would be far louder if it ever came into existence at tournaments with entries of the size they now receive, and with the above conditions unsatisfied.

There is a way by which the complaints of "hanging about" can be met far more satisfactorily than by the institution of a fixed Order of Play. The allotting, and advertising, of specified times at which specified events will be played, at any rate during the earlier days of a tournament, would go far towards minimising them. The most frequent complaints come from players who have perhaps only entered for one event—probably the Mixed Doubles Handicap. Most likely, though they

attend each day, they do not get a game at all till late on the Wednesday, or possibly not till Thursday. Their complaint that they have "hung about three days for nothing," is at any rate excusable. Now all the London and most of the country meetings might very well state on their prospectuses that no player who was entering for doubles handicaps *only* need attend before Wednesday at 4 p.m. As I have previously shown, there are no courts to spare for doubles handicaps before that time, because the congestion in the level events must first be relieved. There is no point in bringing down these players for nothing, and the only result of doing so is to make them think that tournaments are run with a complete lack of system, which is very far from being the case. If they were only told beforehand that they would not be wanted till late on Wednesday, most of their grievance would be removed; and I am sure that steps in this direction could be taken to everybody's advantage.

At the present time there is a tendency in some quarters to think that there are too many tournaments in this country, and that playing in tournaments as they are at present constituted is not calculated to develop improving players as they should be developed, and that this is the real reason why England has fallen behind other countries in the production of players who could be counted among the dozen best in the world. A suggestion has been put forward that tournaments should be divided into two classes—one class including level events only, and the other class handicap events only. I do not think that this suggestion, if carried out, would do a great deal towards restoring England to the top of the tree, because the real reason why other

nations have gone ahead of us is that their players concentrate all their energies on lawn tennis, and make it, as long as they go on playing, the main object of their lives. Whereas our players, fond though they are of the game, do not devote the whole of their existence to playing it, but have other interests in life. I daresay, for example, that the committee which selects our International team may, from a purely national point of view, regret that Max Woosnam should be a first-class cricketer, golfer, and football player, because, if instead of playing these other games he had devoted himself solely to lawn tennis, he might have been a sort of "super-champion" at the game. But does anybody else regret that Woosnam should have distributed his energies over the four games, and probably others? Very few, I should think; and most certainly not Woosnam himself! Nobody would be more pleased than I to see England again producing players to beat all comers; but that pleasure would be dearly bought if I felt that the winners were men who lived only to play lawn tennis, to the exclusion of all other interests.

And, in any case, I do not think that a division of tournaments into level-event meetings and handicap-event meetings would serve the purpose intended, although it is quite likely that "Invitation" tournaments, on the lines of similar meetings in America, might do a good deal towards putting a sort of final polish on to the game of those who are already first-class players without being quite up to "International" form. These players, however, from the very nature of the case, can be but few in number; and even then "Invitation" tournaments would only give them the opportunity of very strenuous match-play, not of "practising" their



strokes, for which they clearly have more opportunity when playing against men inferior in skill in the earlier rounds of the ordinary open tournament. In a succession of Invitation Tournaments they would have to be at concert pitch all the time. A crew practising for a boat race would surely be unlikely to do well in the race itself if its training had been to row full courses at racing speed every day for a fortnight beforehand?

The result of compulsorily dividing tournaments into level and handicap meetings, moreover, would probably soon result in there being no tournaments at all; for the level-event tournaments would only get very small entries, and the handicap meetings would get no "gates." The consequence might well be that neither class of tournament could pay its way, and to that condition of affairs there could be but one end.

The above suggestion was put forward, not only as a means of improving the play of the best players, but as a means of helping to reduce the "congestion" of present-day tournaments. That the huge entries now received make it very hard work for those who survive to the final stages nobody denies; but a better remedy can be found in limiting the number of events for which any player may enter. But not in making a hard-and-fast rule that no competitor shall *play in* more than five, or even more than four, events. There must be a certain amount of latitude, or elasticity, given to committees. If their tournament still receives an entry sufficient to fill the courts for the meeting with players limited to five events, well and good—the limit would stand. If, on the other hand, the entry should be small, there would be no harm in allowing competitors to play in an additional event already on the programme, or in instituting

a post-entry event or two for those who had not got enough play to keep them busy. Too much hard-and-fast regulation of tournaments, so long as they are properly conducted by their committees and their Referees, does more harm than good, and can only result in dissatisfaction among players.



## **HANDICAPS AND HANDICAPPING**



## CHAPTER XIII

### HANDICAPS AND HANDICAPPING

BECAUSE of the enormous difference in skill between good players and bad, lawn tennis is a much more difficult game to handicap than many others. At golf, for example, even the best player could hardly give the worst two strokes a hole in match-play; at croquet quite a small number of "bisques" mark the limit that any player can receive. But whereas in golf and croquet the player is playing his own ball without interference on the part of his opponent, in lawn tennis he is only playing alternate shots at the same ball as his opponent is using. In other words, while at golf and croquet the player himself is always in control of the ball with which he is playing, in lawn tennis a good player is always in control of the ball as against a bad one, and can give him almost any odds and beat him, if he is patient enough to be content with getting the ball back and waiting for the poorer player to put it in the net or out of court, as he is sure to do before long. There are plenty, even of tournament players, so bad that they scarcely ever *win* even a single point for themselves: the few they score come to them through the occasional mistakes of their opponents or through "net-cord" shots or "bad bounces." If, therefore, the bad player is to have a winning chance against the good, he must

have long points given to him by the handicapper, since he can make very few indeed by his own efforts.

In America, I believe, they don't care much about handicap events; and very likely, from the point of view of the improvement of the game, they are right. But in this country handicap events have always been popular, and probably always will be; because, if the handicaps are properly framed, good and bad players can be almost "brought together"; and, anyway, both of them get a lot of fun out of the game.

Lawn Tennis Handicapping has passed through many stages, and even the system at present in use is not perfect, though it is a great improvement on all (or, at any rate, all but one) of its predecessors. In the very earliest days of lawn tennis, when the scoring of points was the same as in Rackets and Badminton, the handicapping of players was naturally done in the same way as at those games. This system only lasted a very short time indeed, because very soon after the game began to be played, the system of scoring at "real" tennis superseded the other; and, with the system of scoring, the system of handicapping at real tennis also came into use. This was the "Bisque" system; and it lasted for about fifteen years, so it evidently had its merits. Nearly all my own tournament play was under it, and personally I was sorry when it was replaced by the "Quarters" system. The Bisque system provided, as does the present system, for six classes of players between scratch and 15, six more between 15 and 30, and six more between 30 and 40, its scale running as follows :

Scratch.

Receive 1 Bisque.

„ 2 Bisesques.

and 1 Bisque.

$\frac{1}{2}$ 15 and 2 Bisesques.

15.

15 and 1 Bisque.

15 and 2 Bisesques.

And so on, until the limit of 40 was reached. "Receive 15" and "receive 30" meant precisely what they mean at the present day, the receipt of 15 or 30 at the beginning of each game. "Receive  $\frac{1}{2}$ 15" or " $\frac{1}{2}$ 30" were equivalent to "receive three-sixths" or "receive 15.3" in the present scale. These odds were *fixed*; they were increased by the addition of one or two bisques between each half-way class from scratch upwards. A bisque was a stroke which might be taken by the player who was in receipt of it at any time during the set (except, I think, after he had served a fault), and the possession of a bisque or so in addition to other odds was a most valuable asset to a player who knew how to take them. But the trouble was that so many players never did learn the best way of using their bisques, or even forgot all about them in the excitement of the game; and so the handicapper's well-meant endeavours to give them a chance often failed in their object. The man with his head screwed on tight therefore got a great advantage over more scatter-brained players; and this eventually proved the cause of the end of the Bisque system of handicapping, since it became clear



that, if handicaps were to answer the purpose for which they were intended, the weaker brethren must be protected against themselves, and given certain definite points of start regardless of whether they remembered that they were entitled to them or not. To ladies in particular, bisques were nearly always a great stumbling-block: they never seemed to appreciate the right time to take one. I remember once at some tournament—Leamington, I think—what almost amounted to a tragedy arising out of this feminine lack of grasping the bisque's value, or forgetting all about it in the heat of battle, which was, as a matter of fact, quite easy to do. There was a very pretty girl who, never being able to decide when to take her bisque, induced a rather distinguished player, to whom she was engaged, to sit by the court when she was playing and drop his racket when the psychological moment arrived. (Though eager partisans often panted to do so, it was not etiquette for onlookers audibly to remind a player that he had a bisque in hand. Besides, it might have led to unpleasantness with the opponent!) Well, the cavalier was on duty, and a tight match reached set all. Early in the third set he wanted to light a cigarette, and, momentarily absent-minded, dropped the racket he had been nursing on his knee. "I will take my bisque!" cried the observant damsel. The score was one-all and 40-love against her at the moment, so that the bisque only made it 40-15; and, not unnaturally, she lost the match after a close finish in which the precious bisque, properly taken, would almost certainly have altered the result. Those who heard the explanations and recriminations in the tea-tent afterwards were not surprised that, after tea, the pair went down heavily in the mixed doubles to a quite inferior couple!

The Bisque system was partly superseded by the Quarters system in 1890, but it was still largely retained in the Northern tournaments and in nearly all those run by B. C. Evelegh, the prince of Referees, who was a staunch supporter of it. I am sorry that it eventually disappeared altogether, and often think that some form of it could be reintroduced with advantage in augmentation of the present Sixths system. A bisque would considerably enlarge the handicapper's scope for allotting odds; and I think that, at the present time when the game is so keenly studied by everybody who plays it, players generally would learn to use their bisques much more intelligently than some of the old-timers used to do.

The introduction of the "Quarters" system, in 1890, was one of the first important pieces of work of the then newly-formed Lawn Tennis Association. It consisted of instituting four classes between scratch and 15, four between 15 and 30, and four between 30 and 40, so that to start with it suffered from the disadvantage of narrowing the range of handicapping instead of expanding it. The system consisted in dividing the games up into groups of four, and the "quarters" were given on the same principle as sixths are now. "One quarter of 15" was one stroke given at the beginning of the second and every subsequent fourth game of a set, *i. e.* on the second, sixth, tenth, etc., games. "Two quarters" was one stroke given at the beginning of the second and every subsequent alternate game of a set, *i. e.* the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, etc.—just the same, in fact, as " $\frac{1}{2}$ 15" under the Bisque system and as "three-sixths" under the present system. "Three quarters" was one stroke given at the beginning of the second, third, and fourth, and the three last of every

subsequent four games of a set, *i. e.*, second, third, fourth; sixth, seventh, eighth, etc. Then came 15—the same as it had been previously, and as it is now. This process was repeated between 15 and 30, and again between 30 and 40.

Although the Quarters system had the advantage of making the table of odds “fool-proof,” it had also the disadvantage of reducing the number of classes between scratch and 40 from nineteen to thirteen; and this cramping of handicappers was what soon led to its downfall. It was the Official system, but it was never the universal one; and the L.T.A. was not at that time a sufficiently powerful body to make it so—or, at any rate, its Council preferred to let tournaments use the Quarters system or the Bisque system indifferently rather than proscribe the latter altogether, a course which might very well have led to the secession of many of the clubs which had affiliated themselves to the Association. As a matter of cold fact, even the Sixths system, now in universal use, is, though official, not compulsory. Any tournament is at liberty to use any system of handicapping it likes; but no tournament, so far as I know, does use any but the Sixths system for the simple reason that hitherto it has worked very fairly well; and it has now been in use for nearly thirty years.

The Sixths system, after failing to receive the approval of the L.T.A. in 1893, was adopted by an overwhelming majority in the following year. It is a perfectly simple system, consisting of giving one or more sixths of 15, *i. e.* 15 in one or more games, up to every game, of each series of six games in a set. “Four-sixths” thus means 15 in four games out of every six;

“one-sixth,” 15 in one game out of every six. Additional odds in the weaker classes are arranged for by giving one or more sixths in addition to 15 or 30, as the case may be. The Sixths system as now used differs only from its form when it was first introduced in 1894 by a rearrangement of the order of the games in which the sixths are taken, and a consequent rearrangement of the Table of Differential Odds. A Table of Differential Odds is necessary because, when two players both of whom are in receipt of odds from a scratch man meet in a handicap match, the player whose odds are the shorter goes back to scratch for the purpose of that particular match, and therefore the other player must have his odds reduced in proportion. But, since bringing the better player back to scratch makes the game longer, and therefore gives him a better chance of winning it, the handicap of the inferior player is not brought back in exact ratio, but has an additional sixth or so added to it for that particular match. To determine where these additional sixths should be given is the purpose of the Table of Differential Odds, first drawn up by the late W. H. Collins, who devoted an immense deal of time and trouble to the game generally and to handicapping questions in particular. When the Sixths system was first introduced the Differential Odds, though mathematically quite accurate, did not in some cases work out very satisfactorily in actual play; but after some years on the original plan, H. S. Scrivener made the great discovery that by altering the order of the games in which sixths were given from the original order to that which is now in force, the anomalies in the Table of Differential Odds could be made to disappear. He and Collins at once set about the construc-

tion of the new scheme; and its advantages were so manifest that the L.T.A. immediately adopted it, in the form in which it now appears in the Regulations.

But though these three successive systems of handicapping have been the only official systems, there was for a long time in use in many parts of the country—and I believe it still survives in some clubs—a system which had a great many points in its favour; and it would be impossible to leave the subject of the Development of Handicapping without reference to it. This was the “Pastime” or “100-up” system. The latter title explains itself: the former was given to it because it was introduced and largely used by N. L. Jackson, the editor of *Pastime*, a weekly paper of those days which devoted a great deal of space to Lawn Tennis. The “Pastime” system boldly scrapped the ordinary method of scoring, eliminating games and sets altogether, and making the match a hundred points up. It was played in series of six services by each side, and it undoubtedly had great merits. First of all, every stroke counted—thereby doing away with the anomaly that, under the ordinary method of scoring, the loser of a match may win more aces, and even more games, than the winner. It was, for the same reason, an excellent test of handicapping. It encouraged concentration, and rewarded consistence. It was very workable. It did away with interminable “deuce” and “’vantages.” And it saved a great deal of time in another way, for the players of a match under the “100-up” system started at their allotted odds instead of the better player being brought back to scratch and the other reduced proportionately. But this saving of time was one of the reasons that eventually killed the “Pastime” system; because if two players with very

long handicaps—say, somewhere in the 70's or 80's—happened to come up against one another, their match was so quickly over that they began to think they were not getting enough play for their money. (I am strongly tempted, as a Referee to whom time is of vital importance, to wish that the “100-up” system were still used; for a match between a 30.2 and a 30.3 player, with the former brought back to scratch and the latter to two-sixths, takes a very great deal longer to play than if they had gone into court to play a hundred up, starting at about 75 and 80 respectively!) Another reason for its failure to be generally adopted was, of course, the predilection in favour of games and sets as the basis of scoring. A combination of the two ideas which would, I think, have been an almost perfect medium of handicapping if it had not died still-born owing to over-elaboration, was invented by the ingenious W. H. Collins. This substituted, for the “match” of “100-up,” a series of games each of twenty-one points up, the player who first won three of these games to be the winner. If the idea had been brought up in this form it might very well have been adopted as at any rate an alternative system of handicapping; but, unfortunately, Collins listened to others who hankered to get still nearer to the old games-and-sets system of scoring, and to make a “match” the best of three sets, each consisting of the best of three games of thirteen points up. This plan suffered from being neither the one thing nor the other, and it never caught on. But “points-up” is a very sound system for handicapping; and I see no reason why, even now, it should not sometimes be used as an alternative to the Sixths system. As I have pointed out, there is nothing in the Regulations to prevent it.

In all these systems of handicapping, except the "100-up" system, provision was also made for odds to be owed, as well as received. A great deal of bad handicapping has been done in the past on account of the inclusion of owed odds in the various systems, because owed odds are entirely deceptive as a guide to relative form. In practice their face value is at least double their real value to the player to whom they are being owed, so far as his chance of winning is concerned. Received odds are the only kind of handicap which gives the weaker player a proper chance; because, if he is receiving odds, he has one, two, or three fewer strokes to make on his own account to win the game, according as to whether he is receiving 15, 30, or 40 from his opponent. If, for example, you are receiving 30, you have only two shots to make for game, while your opponent has to make four. But if, instead of giving you 30, he is *owing* you 30, you have four strokes to make for game, while he has only six. Your chance of winning is therefore reduced by the difference between odds of six to four and odds of two to one. And it is, for all practical purposes, worse than that, remembering that the better player is always in control of the ball, and therefore that, the longer the game, the more certain he is to win it in the end. It would have been better for scientific handicapping if owed odds had never been invented; for they delude inexperienced players (and even handicappers) into the belief that they afford a means of careful differentiation, whereas they do nothing of the sort. B. C. Evelegh, one of the best of handicappers, was quick to recognise this; and the only owed odds he ever allotted were owe three-sixths, owe 15, owe 15.3, etc.—never any of the intermediates between these classes, which he regarded (and

rightly) as refinements of no practical value whatever. The institution of owed odds was, of course, due to the ingenuity of the good players, who very soon found that, while they might occasionally lose to a very much worse player if they gave him very long odds, they could always be sure of beating him if they could induce him to let them *owe* him odds which were, so far as mere appearances went, considerably longer. In most of the tournaments of old times it was generally a pretty safe bet to back the back-markers in handicaps, because owed odds were used by the handicappers of that period much more than they are now. The principal handicappers of to-day have fully recognised the fallacy involved in the use of owed odds; and if the circumstances of any particular handicap compel them to use them, they always take care to allot them on the basis of at least two owed points as the equivalent of one point on the other side of scratch. For example, if a man won one of my handicaps from the one-sixth mark, and I decided to take him down three-sixths for winning, as I normally do, his handicap in his next tournament would be, not owe two-sixths, but owe four-sixths, *i. e.* apparently five-sixths back instead of three. But in many tournaments which are "locally" handicapped, by the committee or otherwise, you are sure to find several players on various "owe" marks, and scarcely anybody receiving more than about 15; and you will also find that the winners almost invariably come from the "owe" players. The handicapping may appear, on the face of it, to be quite good: the matches may be very close (indeed, they generally are); but, if the best players always win in the end, as they do when owed odds are largely employed, the handicapping is *not* good, because the weaker players have no real chance.



If you can give a man 15 and beat him, you can owe him 40 and win quite as easily. If, on the other hand, you usually owe a man 30 and win after a three-set match, you will find he will win more often than you if you try to give him 15. The sole *raison d'être* of owed odds would appear to be to flatter the vanity of the better players: as a method of arriving at the real difference in form between two players who are six classes or more apart on the "receive" side of scratch they are perfectly valueless. One case only arises when they may be harnessed more or less satisfactorily to the handicapper's intention. This is where a handicap has to be framed where there are only two or three fairly decent players and all the rest are very weak. In this case there are not enough good players to make it worth while to divide the event into a first-class and a second-class handicap, and the best way to deal with it is to make it into a "second-class handicap with owe-markers." That is to say, that the bad players are put on the mark they would receive in an ordinary second-class handicap, and the two or three good ones are brought right back behind scratch. A man on the receive 15 mark, for instance, would come back to owe 15, a scratch man to owe 40. This often works very fairly well; but of course if there should happen to be a man entered who would normally be on an "owe" mark, his entry cannot be accepted, because it would be impossible to make him owe enough to prevent him winning. His indignation, if any, under these circumstances, usually dies down quickly when the prospect of owing, say, 80, is held out to him!

The Table of Differential Odds is a monument to the labour of the late W. H. Collins: the only pity of it is that a great deal of it has never been of any material

use. And it has never been of any material use because, of the thirty-seven classes of players contemplated by the Sixths system of handicapping (*i. e.* eighteen classes from "owe 49" to "owe one-sixth"; one class at "scratch"; and eighteen classes from "receive one-sixth" to "receive 40"), not more than about twenty at most are ever to be found in an ordinary "straight-away" handicap—a handicap in which all the players who have entered, good and bad, are included. The absence of the other classes is due to two reasons. First, the really good players, who would be handicapped at anything from owe 15 to owe 40, don't enter for handicap events, both because the giving of long odds inevitably tends to make them play pat-ball instead of tennis, and because, in these days of tournament congestion, the probability that they will go to one or two finals in the level events gives them quite as much play as they will want at a tournament. Secondly, to the really very bad players—the classes from receive 30.2 to receive 40—no handicapper feels justified in allotting the points which they would really need in order to win, but sets an arbitrary limit of 30.2, or in some cases 30.3. This is not, of course, strictly fair to the very bad players; but it is necessary for the general good, to prevent play degenerating into a farce. A match, for example, between two players one of whom was set to owe 30 and give 30.5 to the other would be a farce. Not that the owe-30 man would have no chance of winning. On a good court he would nearly always win, if he chose to suit his game to the circumstances; but he would scarcely be playing tennis, and the probable result would be that he would play very badly indeed the next time he was put into court. Thus there are about twelve classes behind scratch and three or four

in front of it, which are, for all practical purposes, wiped out of the handicapper's range, and to exactly that extent the Sixths system fails to fulfil its function.

The principal—or at any rate the busiest—handicappers in this country at the present day include H. S. Scrivener, C. Marriott, D. R. Larcombe, E. U. Story, Hamilton Price, and myself. Among them they handicap very nearly all the big tournaments and a great many of the smaller ones; and they have for some time past adopted as their uniform basis of handicapping the placing of the Champion at “owe 40,” and *handicapping everybody else from him*. This is, logically, the correct basis. The Sixths system, on which handicappers are practically bound to work, makes “owe 40” the mark on which the best player should be placed. The Champion is, presumably, the best player; therefore owe 40 is his mark. Conversely, the Sixths system contemplates no player worse than “receive 40”; though I take leave to inform its sponsors that many such players not only exist, but actually play in tournaments! Nor have I ever heard one of these unfortunates grumble because he only found “rec. 30.3,” and not “rec. 40” opposite his name on a tournament programme. He does not come to tournaments to win prizes; he comes primarily to enjoy himself, and probably has some desperate idea that he may, in addition, improve his game.

This is just where the Sixths system is apt to be unsatisfactory. It is not sufficiently elastic. Its thirty-seven classes of players do not, in fact, anywhere nearly represent the difference in form between the best player and the worst. And obviously when for all practical purposes sixteen or seventeen of those thirty-seven classes are wiped off the sheet for the reasons given

above, its limitations as regards elasticity are more pronounced than ever.

To meet this difficulty, it has long been the custom to divide singles handicaps into first and second classes when the number of entries is large enough to justify this course being adopted; and with the largely-increased entries of present-day tournaments, there are very few tournaments indeed where this plan could not be used with advantage. The division ensures that the back-markers will not be called upon to give what they generally term "ridiculous" odds; each class of players meets players not too widely separated from it in skill. Hitherto the handicappers mentioned above have all taken 15.3 as the limit of their first-class handicaps; that is to say, all players behind scratch, on scratch, and up to rec. 15.3 are included in the first-class handicap. The man who would receive 15.4 if the handicap were *not* divided into classes becomes scratch in the second-class handicap, which is composed of all players in the remaining classes, *i. e.* from 15.4 to 40. The Table of Differential Odds enacts that the 40 man shall receive 30 from the 15.4 man; and this generally suffices. In the case of very bad players it is still not quite enough; but considering the difficulties of bringing two players together at lawn tennis, it is a good workable basis. In future, at any rate, it will have to be enough; for the L.T.A. decided at its last General Meeting that no competitor should receive more than 30. This decision will make it absolutely necessary that very nearly all handicaps, both singles and doubles, will have to be divided into two classes in future, unless the indefeasible right of a player to a handicap that will give him a fair chance of winning is to be taken away. It remains to be seen, from a practical test,

whether any alteration in the present limit-mark between first- and second-class handicaps will be necessary. Personally, I think that handicappers will be able to maintain it as it stands.

With the very largely augmented number of players who enter for tournaments at the present day it is more difficult to construct a good handicap than it was in the years immediately preceding the War, when the percentage of players previously unknown to the handicapper at any tournament was seldom above 15 to 20. Now it is very often over 50; but this percentage will probably tend to lessen rather than increase. The best test, in my opinion, of handicapping is *the number of games won by the loser* in a match. Evelegh used to say that he regarded a match won at a score of 6/4, 6/4 as a well-handicapped game; but either he underestimated what his own results, analysed, might have shown him, or else handicapping has improved since his day. The score of six-four, six-four represents a match of twenty games. Hardly any tournament—and I have analysed the handicap results of hundreds of them—shows as low a figure as twenty as the *average* number of games played in the whole of its handicap matches. Out of, say, a hundred tournaments about thirty will average between 20 and 21 games per match (with a *very* few under 20); about forty between 21 and 22; and the remaining thirty over 22 and up to 24. Personally I consider that I have handicapped a tournament badly if the average does not reach 21·5; and I am not really satisfied with it if it is not 22 or over, *i. e.* an advance of two whole games on the Evelegh standard.

The three essentials for handicapping a tournament are time, data, and reliable information. The time between the finish of one tournament and the beginning

of the next is very short; and part of it may be taken up by travelling from one end of England to the other; but I always try, and generally succeed, in having at least the singles handicaps on the Monday's programme, reserving the doubles for a later day, so that I may have some chance of seeing whether I have clearly given some unknown player too much or too little in the singles. Then I can adjust his handicap in the doubles accordingly. The second essential are data. No handicapper can do his work properly unless he can collect the programmes of as nearly as possible all the tournaments held in the country, and get the programmes of the previous week's tournaments in time to use them for the purpose of handicapping the meeting on which he is entering; for there is no other source of information. To this end there is a regular interchange of programmes between the principal handicappers; and, when this is not available, tournament secretaries are generally very willing to forward a completed programme of their meeting if they are asked to do so. But besides the programmes, I, personally, keep a Handicap Register (extending back over many years), in which is entered the name of every individual player who comes to any of the tournaments at which I officiate; and I have no doubt all other handicappers also do so. This Register is of great value, especially in the case of a man who has not played in public, or has been playing abroad, for some years, since his mark when he last played under me can be immediately traced by it. I always take with me to a tournament my Registers, containing over ten thousand players ready handicapped, and as many years' bundles of programmes as I can find room for, generally the five or six previous years' at least. Any player who, not being a novice, cannot be traced by

either of these means I leave unhandicapped until I can find out, either from him personally or from other sources, on what mark he ought to go.

The third essential to good handicapping is reliable information. This every competitor is afforded an opportunity of giving to the handicapper by means of the "handicap form" which invariably accompanies the entry form on which the competitor makes his entry. If he has played in tournaments before he is asked to give (1) the names and dates of the last two tournaments in which he has played, and (2) the name and date of the last tournament at which he won a handicap prize of any description. If he is entering for a tournament for the first time he is asked to give any information he can with regard to his play that will be of use to the handicapper; *e. g.* his form as compared with that of some player who has played in tournaments, or the name of some member of the tournament committee who knows his form, or his handicap in his own club. There is no excuse for a handicapper making an error in handicapping a player who gives recent public form as a guide, because he has either himself been the handicapper at the tournament to which he is referred, or has (or should have) the programme of it from which he can see exactly the handicap the player had there, and what he did with it. The handicapper's difficulties arise when the intending competitor has no public form to give. Of course, if he says "I play a good deal with J. J. Jones, who played in the Frinton tournament a month ago, and can just beat him when he gives me 15," the thing is simple enough. Even information such as "Not in my College VI" is a guide. But few novices are so illuminating as even the latter of these instances. Most content themselves with saying that they have

“never played in a tournament before,” or that their “backhand is weak,” or that (as the case may be) they “have just left school,” or are “over fifty.” None of these items of information, though doubtless interesting, is in the least helpful, though I must admit that, to the man who once summed up his capabilities in the original and expressive word “*Wrotten!*” I had no difficulty in allotting a mark which gave him some fun while not causing his opponents any great anxiety! Even reference to a committee-man is not always satisfactory, because it is often difficult to get hold of the committee-man referred to, and in any case committee-men have frequently only seen the player once, and then not noticed him particularly; and even if they do know a little more about him, sometimes quite unintentionally give an account of his play which is misleading rather than helpful. I generally now put in a novice who is really unable even to give any such definite information as in the first instance I quoted, on a “safe mark.” In other words, he has to “buy” his first handicap. It would be unfair to competitors who have been playing for perhaps two or three seasons without ever winning a prize to put the novice on the limit mark, just because he has never played in a tournament before. So, if the novice can (or will) give no definite information about himself, I put him at scratch in the second class (= 15.4)—a mark where he is unlikely to do much harm to anybody (because even if his skill is worthy of a shorter handicap, his lack of tournament experience will stop him after a round or two); but a mark which at the same time will probably give him the chance of showing what he can or cannot do, so that at the next tournament at which I handicap him I shall be able to put him on or about his true mark.



In the case of a girl, on the other hand, the "safe mark" is considerably higher, because lack of tournament experience will generally tell more heavily with a girl than with a man. Even with 15 in the second class she is very unlikely to win. Since the war, though, I am rather wary of making the safe mark for girls quite so high; for they seem to be much less affected by "nerves" than they were, and get so much more coaching and good play at their schools. Indeed, three- or four-sixths in the second class is as much as I would give to a girl who had been captain of the first six at a big school. And some of them find their way very quickly into the first class after a tournament or two.

In no case do I ever handicap a novice from watching him play. Even the worst players make a good shot or two sometimes, or have quite a respectable service, if nothing to back it up with. I often see players whose proper mark is away up in the 30's making shots that would seem to indicate that they ought not to have more than 15 at the most. "Paper form" is the only guide that is of any practical use, and I stick to it entirely. Occasionally I put on a man who has no public form to play a level single before he plays in the handicap singles, so as to get a line; but this plan is not much good unless he happens by some chance to beat his man, which seldom happens. If he beats his man, and I know the latter's form, it is a good guide; but if he loses, as he probably will, even if the match has been fairly close it gives little real indication, because the winner, finding he was going to have an easy game, may very well have devoted the time spent in playing it to practising his strokes. And in any case form in level events is not a good guide to handicap form.

With regular tournament players, on the other hand,

there is practically no difficulty. The only trouble is that they often omit to fill in their handicap form at all, or content themselves with scrawling "known to handicapper" across it. They *are* known, of course, but every handicapper would bless them more if they would take the trouble to give the information asked for, as it may be a month or two since they have played in one of his tournaments, and their form in tournaments since then may necessitate an alteration of a sixth or two one way or the other in the tournament for which they are entering.

The one thing a handicapper wants is *definite* information. If he can get it, he can place the competitor on his proper mark. If he cannot, it is his duty to the other players to place the competitor on a safe mark. There are very, very few would-be competitors who cannot give *some* definite information if they try; if they don't, or won't, it is their own fault that the handicapper does not put them on a mark which will give them an equal chance of success with all other competitors. That, after all, is what he wants to do, what he sets out to do, and what he can do if competitors will do their best to help him.

It must not be supposed, however, that players fail to give what information they can from any idea of concealing their form and so getting a handicap to which they are not entitled. In the case of the thousands and thousands of people whom I have handicapped, I should say that the cases of intentional misleading of the handicapper could be counted on the fingers of one hand. And this, I think, is a pretty good testimony to the "straightness" of lawn-tennis players as a class. The advantage to a handicapper, who is practically bound to trust the information which competitors themselves

give him, of never finding that trust misplaced, is too big to need demonstration. If he could not do so, his work could not be done at all. Indeed, the boot is rather on the other leg; a player often comes into my tent on the first day of a tournament and says, "I won a second prize in the handicap singles at the — tournament last week, after I'd sent in my entry-form here: I thought I ought to tell you." And very often players ask me if I can't put them in the first-class handicap next time, though this may mean the automatic sacrificing of perhaps as much as three- or four-sixths of their proper handicap. It is to improve their game that such players come to tournaments, not for the sake of winning prizes—and all the more credit to them.

To handicap singles, given the foregoing three essentials—time, data, and reliable information—is not a matter of great difficulty. Where the real value of the professional handicapper comes in is in the handicapping of doubles. For here there are many points that require consideration. Good doubles handicaps are not made by the simple process of adding the singles handicaps of the two partners together and halving the sum. That is merely a very rough basis; it is the "polishing-up" of that rough result that alone can give satisfaction. The principal point, perhaps, a handicapper has to consider, is whether the two players are a regular pair, or have never played in partnership before. Take the case of four players, for example, all on the 15 mark in a single. Two of them are a regular "pair"—I should probably not give them more than one-sixth in a double. The other two have never played together before; they would probably find themselves on the 15.1 or 15.2 mark. Another point which has to be considered is great disparity in form between two partners: in this

case they will want in a double a little over the points which the "add-and-divide" method will give them, because they are sure, sooner or later, to encounter a pair who will not take long to find out the very weak player, and will pepper him accordingly. Then there are some players who are particularly good in a mixed double, but nothing out of the ordinary in a men's; and conversely. These have to be specially arranged for, according as to which event they are being handicapped for. It is in "polishing-up" a doubles handicap that handicappers find their most interesting work. At least, I do; and I have no doubt others find the same thing. Many players—particularly ladies—specialise in doubles with a particular partner. They are no good in singles, but as they have practised continually together and know each other's capabilities and limitations thoroughly, they often make very good pairs indeed in a double; and unless the handicapper has his wits about him he may "let them in" very badly. A handicapper who goes to a large number of tournaments in the course of a season soon gets to know all about these pairs; but personally I always take care, when I am handicapping a player I have never met before, not to content myself with seeing that he or she was badly beaten in singles on the 30.1 mark in the tournament referred to on the handicap form, but to look up the doubles and see what happened there as well; and especially to see if the competitor is again entering with the same partner.

In a short article which I wrote for *Ayres' Lawn Tennis Almanack*, 1911, I pointed out that there were four ways in which handicaps could be improved, three of which were within the range of practical politics. The first was the abolition of owed odds altogether;

the second, the general division of all handicaps, singles and doubles, into two, or even more, classes; the third, the abolition of proportional differentiation of odds. Of these, the second seems now in a fair way of being brought about, now that the new Regulation limiting handicaps to 30 in each class is coming into force. If it proves successful (and I think it will be successful in the case of the larger tournaments) the owed-odds question becomes relatively unimportant, because owed odds will seldom be required; and it may be reasonably expected that before long the third improvement may also be made, since classes very far apart in the table of differential odds will no longer be called upon to meet.

The fourth way in which at that time I thought handicaps could be improved was by a complete alteration in the method of scoring at lawn tennis. This would consist in lengthening the game to five points up instead of four; and, in compensation for the longer time the games would take to play, shortening the set to five games up instead of six. This would give a large increase of "elasticity," which is just what the handicapper wants. I am still, merely as a handicapper, convinced that this method of scoring would result in better handicapping; but I see no chance whatever of the change being adopted, because the present system of scoring works well enough in ordinary matches on level terms, and it is not likely that so drastic an alteration would be made simply for the purpose of improving handicaps. It must remain, I fear, a dream.

It would not be right to conclude this chapter without reference to a scheme, first projected about ten years ago and still obtaining a certain amount of support, for giving all tournament players an "official

handicap" framed by an Official Handicapper. In 1920 a sub-committee of the Council of the L.T.A. was appointed to inquire into the question, and to consider whether it was advisable, and, if so, whether it was practicable. At the 1921 General Meeting of the L.T.A. the Report stated that nothing further had been done in the matter, but that the sub-committee was still deliberating. In theory the idea of a Universal Handicap is most attractive: the difficulties come when it is attempted to put the idea into practice. If such a scheme is ever to come into operation, it must have two things to support it. First, it must be generally desired by the majority of players. From innumerable conversations I have had with regular tournament players on the subject, I have found that few seem to desire any change from the present system of handicapping by individual professional handicappers, which at any rate works well. Secondly, every tournament would be *compelled* to divide all their handicaps into classes. It will be well to observe the working of the new handicap regulation limiting handicaps to 30, and its effect on the smaller tournaments where it is likely to be unwelcome, in this respect, before making it compulsory on tournament committees to divide all their handicaps. Official handicapping might possibly be workable in the case of singles; but I cannot see anything but failure before it in the case of doubles. Every player would be given a handicap in doubles as well as in singles; and in any case the Referee or the committee of a tournament would have to "add and divide" the respective handicaps of the two partners in a double, but there would be no opportunity for the "polishing-up" process to which I have referred above. And it is just this "polishing-up" which makes all the

difference between a good doubles handicap and a bad one. Of necessity the Official Handicap would be rigid; and I do not see how it would be possible to give any player a rigid doubles handicap, because, in my opinion, a doubles handicap ought to vary according to whether a player is entering with a partner with whom he plays regularly or with one with whom he has never played before. I feel pretty sure that if an Official Handicap ever does come into existence, its disadvantages will outweigh its advantages; and I imagine, from the fact of a year having gone by without further action being taken, that the members of the sub-committee appointed to inquire into the question are being, perhaps reluctantly, forced to the same conclusion.

# **THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GAME**





## CHAPTER XIV

### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GAME

IN England it is generally not till after a game has been played for some considerable time that any steps are taken by its players towards forming an "Association" for the purpose of "governing" it. In the case of some games, no Association is ever formed at all. Such "government" as cricket, for example, requires is provided by the Marylebone Cricket Club; while the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews remains the governing body in golf. But most games, after a period of development of uncertain duration, seem to gravitate naturally into forming their players or their clubs into an Association; for the purpose, initially, of getting a universally accepted code of laws, and of obtaining the general opinion of all players of the game, through their representatives, on any question of importance with regard to its development or administration.

The first Rules for playing the game of Lawn Tennis were, oddly enough, drawn up by the Marylebone Cricket Club in 1875, about a year after the first game of lawn tennis had been played in public on the old Prince's Cricket Ground in Hans Place, Brompton. In the same year (1875) the All England Croquet Club devoted some of the lawns of their Club at Wimbledon to the new game; and also drew up twenty-five Laws

of the Game, first published in 1877. Their laws and the M.C.C. laws were amalgamated in the following year, and published under the title of "Laws of Lawn Tennis as adopted by the M.C.C. and the A.E.C. and L.T.C." There were thirty-three numbered laws and one unnumbered in this publication, which was re-issued annually under the joint ægis of the two clubs up to and including 1888; while the All England Club on its own authority drew up and issued twenty-seven Regulations for the Management of Prize Meetings in 1881. For more than thirteen years these two clubs, one a cricket club and the other originally a croquet club, combined to form the sole legislative authority for lawn tennis in this country. And, like the House of Lords in the song in "Iolanthe," they

". . . . . did nothing in particular,  
And did it very well."

But their autocratic, if benevolent, rule began to be challenged about 1885 by enthusiastic players in parts of the country remote from London, who desired to have some voice in the management of the game in which they were so greatly interested. As is always the case, the voice of those who wished to form an Association was pooh-poohed by those already in a position of authority; but the movement gathered strength, and at a meeting convened by H. S. Scrivener and G. W. Hillyard, and held on January 26, 1888, at the Freemasons' Tavern, Great Queen St., after a very animated and at times stormy discussion, "The National Lawn Tennis Association" was duly formed. This title was, at a later meeting, changed to "The Lawn Tennis Association"; and in 1889 were published—"Official Edition. The Laws of Lawn Tennis, issued

under the authority of the Lawn Tennis Association " and " Official Edition. Regulations for the Management of Lawn Tennis Prize Meetings and Inter-County and Inter-Club Meetings, issued under the authority of the Lawn Tennis Association." In these two publications the Laws had grown in number to forty-one, while the Regulations had been reduced to twenty-three, and supplemented by six Recommendations; while there were fifteen Regulations for Club and County Meetings.

Thus the L.T.A. came into existence and established itself as the law-giver and guardian of the game; a position it still holds, and holds more strongly than ever, to-day. For many years it was at variance with the All England Club, which had at any rate some initial justification for feeling slighted, since it was neither invited to nor officially represented at the meeting at which the Association was formed. But, in time, these troubles passed away; and the Association and the Club are now linked together by an equal desire for the welfare and improvement of the game, and by a common interest in the success of the new Championships ground in Wimbledon Park.

The Association is an Association not only in name but in fact; to it are affiliated not only all the County Associations and most of the principal clubs in this country, but a large number even of the National Associations of other countries, including Australia, Ceylon, Chili, Czecho-Slovakia, Finland, Ireland, Jamaica, Mauritius, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland, South Africa, Uganda, Victoria, and Wales. Its Laws and Regulations go into all lands: even the United States National Lawn Tennis Association has not departed from them except in minute and unimportant particulars; though if any National Authority could find

justification in making laws of its own it would be the U.S.N.L.T.A., which, having been founded in 1881, is seven years senior in point of age to the L.T.A. itself.

In view of the spread of the game all over the world an attempt to form a sort of universal Lawn Tennis Association was made some nine or ten years ago; and an International Lawn Tennis Federation is actually in existence. But, since it has no control over the Laws of the game, and since the champion nation of to-day—the U.S.A.—refuses to become affiliated to it or to recognise its authority, its present usefulness is not obvious. Its chief activity up to the present time has been to institute “World’s Championships” on grass, hard, and covered courts, respectively; and it cannot be truly said that these particular championships, as such, arouse any vast enthusiasm, or even interest, among lawn-tennis players generally. An International Federation may be desirable, and might do extremely valuable work if its authority were universally acknowledged and unquestioned; but a *sine quâ non* of the possibility of fulfilling its functions is that it must be thoroughly and completely representative. This the International Federation, as it stands, is not; and is not likely to be for some time to come. And even the desirability of such a body is open to doubt; for it is by no means unlikely that international friendships made, and apparently firmly cemented on the courts, might not show a tendency to disintegrate in disagreements or even quarrels in the Council Chamber.

The affairs of the Lawn Tennis Association are managed by a Council consisting of about seventy members, including officers. The Council appoints several Committees to deal with the various subjects which normally come before it; viz. a Finance and

General Purposes Committee, a Rules Committee, an International Match Committee, a Tournaments Committee, an Inter-County Championship Committee, a Ball-Test Committee, a Professional Control Committee, and a Civic Competitions Committee. Most of these committees have a great deal of hard work to get through; but that work is, for the most part, very well done; and only two of the committees—the International Match Committee and the Tournaments Committee—ever come in for much outside criticism. The International Match Committee, every time it selects a team for the Davis Cup, naturally serves as a cock-shy for all those who could have selected a much better team themselves. And their name, of course, is Legion. The difficulties of selecting a really representative team are, no doubt, very great; and the Committee has not always followed the good plan of, when the choice lies between a good old player and a good young player, picking the latter so as to give him experience which may be of the utmost national value in the future when the older man will be too old in any case to play; but the selectors have at any rate contrived to pick a team good enough to win the Davis Cup on five occasions and only to be beaten by the odd match in five on three others. So that they have something to their credit. And they have never sent men to play in a Davis Cup match upon whom they could not rely with confidence to uphold the country's reputation for thoroughly good sportsmanship, on and off court, and win or lose—in itself no small matter when international relations are concerned.

The Tournaments Committee is periodically assailed because it does not achieve the impossible by making all tournaments perfect. It is adjured to refuse permission to hold a tournament at all to clubs some of

whose courts fall short—and, often enough, a long way short—of perfection; or to clubs which cannot provide sufficient hard courts to carry a tournament through in the event of wet weather. But there is as much common-sense on the Tournaments Committee as there is lack of it in some of their critics; its members take a wider view, and recognise that a very large number of people play in tournaments far more with the idea of enjoying themselves and having a jolly week than in the hope that they will ever become first-class players. The Tournaments Committee has done, is doing, and will continue to do much to improve playing conditions for all classes of players without finding any necessity for such drastic action as is often recommended to it.

Besides the criticism launched against some of its committees the Council as a whole has been often in the past, and is often now, charged with being “out of touch” with the players of to-day and their requirements. A certain amount of colour for this charge has undoubtedly been given by the fact that, at more than one Annual General Meeting of the L.T.A. in recent years, resolutions recommended by the Council for adoption have been rejected by large majorities. But as in the case of all other “representative” governments, the remedy lies in the hands of those who elect the Council, viz. the affiliated county associations and clubs. And that these electors do not see any real reason for changing their representatives on the Council is fairly obvious from the fact that the Council is re-elected, practically *en bloc*, every year. It is seldom that more than half a dozen new candidates are even nominated for the Council, and of these still more seldom are more than one or two elected. The eligibility of the members of the Council for re-election is provided for

in the constitution of the Association; but I am by no means sure that the provision is sound. There is always a very natural reluctance to interfere with men who give up a great deal of their time to work on a body like the Council of the L.T.A., and do that work well; but it is not impossible that if a certain proportion—a quarter or even a third—of the Council retired each year and were ineligible for re-election for twelve months, those who were elected in their place might bring fresh minds to bear on the problems, old and new, with which the Council has to deal, to the advantage both of the Council itself and of the game whose interests it guards. But in any case a player who has a grievance has only to get himself appointed by some affiliated club as its representative at the Annual General Meeting of the L.T.A., give due notice of the resolution he wishes to propose, and take the sense of the meeting upon it. It is only at a General Meeting that alteration can be made in the Laws of the Game or the Rules or Regulations of the Association, and then only by a two-thirds majority in favour of the change. It is therefore in the Lawn Tennis Association itself, and not in its Council, that the real power lies: if it does not use that power it has little justification for complaint.

What the L.T.A. does for the club and the tournament player the newly-formed Public Parks Association, affiliated to the L.T.A., will endeavour to do for those players from whom it takes its name. This body is still in early infancy; but it has a wonderful opportunity before it. I wish it the best of luck.

Also affiliated to the L.T.A. is another newly-instituted Association—the Lawn Tennis Umpires Association—which, it is hoped, may fulfil in this country the functions which an Association with similar name and



aims has for some years past carried out very successfully in the United States. Its object is to enrol competent umpires and linesmen, and supply them to tournaments which are in need of their services. It has hitherto been only by the good nature of competitors who are willing, when not themselves playing, to umpire matches for others that tournaments in this country have been able to "get through" at all. If the Umpires Association meets with the success it deserves, a good deal of this strain will be removed from players, and the difficulties of those responsible for the management of tournaments appreciably lessened. Moreover, the Association's Umpires, being thoroughly competent, having a sound knowledge of the Laws of the game, and having the authority of the Association at their backs, ought to be instrumental in removing a really bad feature in lawn tennis at the present time—the continual and persistent breaches of the law relating to foot-faults by players of all classes.

Even if the Umpires Association never achieved anything more than this it would amply justify its existence. But there is no reason why it should not do much more, when it really gets to work; and though it must necessarily start in a small way, it would not be surprising if, in a few years' time, its official badge became one of the most treasured possessions of those qualified to wear it.

Nearly all the lawn tennis-playing countries have formed National Associations of their own. In some cases, as has been shown, these Associations have affiliated themselves to the L.T.A.; in others, they have not. But the relations between the L.T.A. and those which prefer to maintain a position of independence

have always been marked by complete cordiality and confidence; and there is no reason whatever to suppose that those relations will in the future be any less mutually satisfactory than in the past. The game is too big for quarrels.



## **SOME VEXED QUESTIONS**



## CHAPTER XV

### SOME VEXED QUESTIONS

THERE are several "hardy annuals" in connection with lawn tennis which crop at up regular or irregular intervals, create a great deal of talk, correspondence, and discussion, and, so far as this country is concerned, usually result in nothing whatever being done. Lawn tennis legislation has, with us, never moved with speed : ten or a dozen years' spasmodic consideration seems to be a necessary prelude to action being taken. There is certainly a good deal to be said on the side of giving plenty of consideration to any problem; it is our national characteristic to be guided by precedent—in other words, to let things remain as they are. But this characteristic is not necessarily shared by the players and the governing bodies of other countries. In time they get tired of waiting to have a lead given them by this country with regard to matters which concern players of all nationalities; and, perhaps naturally, embark upon innovations of their own. It cannot be for the good of the game that it should be played under rules and conditions which differ in different countries; and this feeling was no doubt largely contributory to the formation of the International Federation, which might have been a very useful body if more care had been taken at its birth to make it really internationally representative. But without the allegiance

and co-operation of the United States the hopes of general agreement on all points affecting the conduct of the game raised by the formation of the International Federation seem doomed to disappointment.

Meanwhile the Americans, at any rate, have no hesitation in making experiments which they consider to be for the good of the game. At the annual meeting of the U.S.N.L.T.A. in February of this year, for example, legislation was brought forward and passed to alter the whole system of conducting the "draw," by providing that the draw, not only in Championships but in all level events at all tournaments in the U.S.A., should not, as heretofore, be conducted by drawing the names of competitors haphazard out of a hat—a method which might result in bringing the two best players against each other in the very first round—but by "seeding" the draw by placing the two presumably best players in different halves of the draw to start with, and continuing on this principle with the next best players in other sections of the draw, so that the last eight or at any rate the last four players left in should also be the best eight or the best four, if they played up to their previous form.

This "seeding" of the draw has been the subject of discussion in this country for at least twenty years past. Nearly every time that the two (presumably) best players in an important event meet in an early round it bursts forth afresh. But No. 18 of the Regulations for the Management of Prize Meetings still reads as follows: "The Draw shall be conducted in the following manner: Each competitor's name shall be written on a separate card or paper, and these shall be placed in a bowl or hat, drawn out one by one at random, and copied on a list in the order in which they have

been drawn." I do not suppose that any single one of the thousands of tournaments licensed by the L.T.A. conducts, or ever has conducted, its draw according to the literal instructions of the Regulation, because the far less cumbersome but equally fair method of having the competitors' names ready on a numbered list and drawing numbers instead of names is obviously a quicker and better way of getting the work done. But that is only by the way. The point of the Regulation is that, if carried out, it ensures that the draw shall be "straight"—that no "juggling" of the two best players into different halves of the draw shall be permitted. But making a Regulation is one thing: seeing that it is carried out is quite another. And one of the chief reasons why the advocates for "seeding the draw" in this country have never succeeded in obtaining much support for their proposals, so far as the case for doing so at ordinary tournaments is concerned, is simply because, up to quite recent times, the draw was, in fact, very frequently "seeded" by tournament committees, not at all with the intention of favouring any particular competitor or competitors, but with the hope of getting the best possible "final" on the concluding day of the meeting, and thereby attracting a large crowd of paying spectators on that day. In excuse for this infraction of the spirit as well as the letter of the Regulation, it must be remembered that many tournaments rely entirely on their "gate" to pay their expenses, and that many of the people who paid to see lawn tennis played were not discriminating, and imagined that the final day must necessarily produce the finest play; in any case that was the day for them to go, because that was the day "everybody" would be going. They are learning better now. And with the spread of educa-



tion among the lawn tennis public, tournament committees have learnt better too. I believe that the "faked" draw is now rare. Good matches every day of the week are found to attract good gates every day of the week; and a good gate every day is much more profitable than a big one on Saturday only, which was the normal result of the "faked" draw.

But it is not at all with the question of gate-money that seeding the draw is concerned so far as it relates to a Championship event. The gate-money is going to be there in any case, whether the draw is straight or seeded; and even if there were no gate at all the Championship would still be held. It would be held because it decides who is the best player of the year in the country in which it is played; and lawn tennis players all the world over would never rest content without deciding that question, even if no one but the umpire and linesmen watched them fight it out. The real point is whether the Championship can be most fairly played for, and its winner be acknowledged to be unquestionably the best player, under a "seeded" or under a "straight" draw. The advocates of the straight draw take their stand on the basis that every competitor in a Championship should be given, so far as the draw is concerned, an equal chance, without regard to his skill. This attitude is, at first sight, unimpeachable. But it involves shutting the eyes to the fact that some ninety per cent. of the competitors in any Championship have no real chance of winning it, whatever their luck in the draw may be. The advocates of the seeded draw, on the other hand, lay it down that things should be made as fair as possible *for and as between the few players from among whom the winner will almost certainly eventually come.* They contend

that, if there are, say, eight players all of whom possess a reasonable chance of winning, it should be made impossible for seven of them to find themselves all in one half of the draw and the eighth in the other. Now this is perfectly possible under the straight draw; and very often indeed it happens that the draw, if not quite so unfortunate as in the instance given, is yet very one-sided. This means that while one competitor, A, may reach the final only after four or five very hard and exhausting fights, he may meet, in the vital round on which the Championship depends, a player, B, who has enjoyed a series of easy victories. If this happens it is quite possible that B, though not such a good player as A, may yet defeat him owing to the cumulative effect of the continued strain of the hard matches which A has gone through, while B has had no such strain, because of his luck in the draw. That such a thing has ever actually happened is doubtful: I know of no certain instance. But it is clear enough that it *might* happen; and the advocates of seeding the draw are acting on the maxim that prevention is better than cure. In any case, a straight draw is often responsible for one or more of the admittedly best players in the Championship being beaten out of the competition in the first or second round, with a consequent loss of interest in the event. A conspicuous instance of this occurred at Wimbledon in 1920, when J. C. Parke and the two Americans, W. M. Johnston and W. T. Tilden, were generally admitted to be the three best players entered. The draw brought out Johnston against Parke in the very first round, and the winner had to play Tilden in the second! An only slightly less unlucky draw in the U.S.A. Championship of 1921 was no doubt largely responsible for the action taken

by the U.S.N.L.T.A. in bringing forward its seeding resolution.

The American alteration of the law of the draw has been most carefully considered and drawn up; and if it be granted that the object of holding a Championship is to discover the best player of the year under a system by which all those competitors who have any real chance of winning (without regard to others) shall be subjected to as nearly as possible an equal strain as between themselves, it is certainly calculated to attain that object. It provides that, when the entries number 64 or fewer, not more than eight and not fewer than two names shall be seeded; and when the entries exceed 64 at least eight names *shall* be seeded, and one additional name for each additional eight entries *may*, in the discretion of the managing committee, be seeded. Preparatory to the draw the committee are to rank, in order of merit, the names which they intend to seed, and this ranking is to be published simultaneously with the publication of the draw. The prescribed method of seeding is that, if two names are to be seeded, they are drawn by lot, the first drawn being placed at the top of the upper half of the draw and the other at the top of the lower half. If four are to be seeded, 1 and 2 are drawn and placed as above, 3 and 4 are drawn by lot, the first drawn being placed at the top of the second quarter of the draw, and the other at the top of the fourth quarter. If eight are to be seeded, 1, 2, 3 and 4 are drawn as above, and 5, 6, 7 and 8 are drawn by lot and placed, as they come out of the hat, the first name at the top of the first eight (not already occupied by a seeded entrant) in the upper half; the second at the top of the first eight (not already occupied) in the lower half, the third and fourth in the first eights not

already occupied in the upper and lower halves respectively. And if more than eight names are to be seeded, they are to be similarly drawn and placed at the top of respective sixteenths of the draw. This seeding is to apply to the American "home" players only: if foreign players of sufficient ability to warrant their being seeded enter, the committee is to rank them in order of merit, and seed them as follows:—1 and 2 are to be drawn by lot and placed in different halves of the draw and at the bottom of a quarter of the draw which shall also be decided by lot; 3 and 4 at the bottom of the two quarters not already occupied by foreign competitors; and eight or sixteen similarly to the home players, except that the foreign player always goes to the bottom instead of the top of the eight or sixteen in which he is drawn. After the seeding is completed the names of all other entrants are drawn and filled in to the draw from top to bottom in the order in which they are drawn. The result, in theory at any rate, is that each good player gets an easy match, or possibly two easy matches, to start with; and then, in each succeeding round, meets opponents gradually increasing in strength (if the seeding committee has been justified in its estimate) right up to the final, to which the two best players should have survived.

This arrangement is not nearly so intricate as it sounds. And, so far as American players are concerned, it will not be difficult to select the names to be seeded, because the managing committee has, ready to hand, the Official Ranking of Players issued at the close of each year by the U.S.N.L.T.A., and has only to take into consideration whether the sudden rise of some young player to prominence during the year when the Championship—held very much later in the season than ours—

is being played for justifies his inclusion among the names of those to be seeded. Up to last year the U.S.N.L.T.A. has ranked about a hundred players in the National Ranking List; but its Ranking Committee only nominated twenty men, twenty women, and ten men's pairs at the end of 1921 in its National Ranking, though in the different Sectional Rankings (eleven in number), close on two hundred men were included, besides women and pairs. So far as most of the foreign entries for the U.S.A. Championship are concerned, however, the managing committee will have to do its own ranking. France, it is true, now issues a Ranking List; but there has never been an Official Ranking of Players in this country, or in many others. If seeding the draw should come into general favour, it will undoubtedly force the hands of the governing bodies of all countries in the direction of issuing an Official National Ranking at the end of each season.

It is, perhaps, needless to say that an Official Ranking has often been suggested in this country; but the suggestion has never borne fruit. The two main objections have been that an Official Ranking would be "a great deal of trouble" to make, and that "you would be sure to hurt people's feelings," because some of them would be ranked in a lower place than that to which they consider their play entitles them. Of course it would be a great deal of trouble; but that in itself is a poor argument. Presumably it is a great deal of trouble in America, or in any other country which ranks its players; but other countries consider the trouble taken worth while because of the incentive a Ranking List offers to their young players to improve and get into it. I am quite sure that the Official Ranking List has had a good deal to do with putting the U.S.A.

at the top of the lawn-tennis playing countries at the present time. Of course, also, the Englishman has, I suppose, a sacred and inalienable right not to have his feelings hurt; but in any case only the players whose day is really over, though they know it not, would have any real cause to feel aggrieved; and the young players, who are the very players we ought to encourage, would be greatly encouraged not only to get into and keep in the List, but to improve their play so as also to improve their position in it year by year. And even the older players would get, in this country, a high ranking, because our players go on playing for many years, and names still count for much. I should not be surprised if W. J. Clothier is not one of the proudest men in America to-day; for he is placed sixteenth in the 1921 U.S.A. Ranking List, and he won the U.S.A. Championship sixteen years ago. To have retained so high a position in a country where youth counts so overwhelmingly must be to him a satisfaction far outweighing the fact that he may not play quite so well as he used to do.

And, finally, that the experiment of making an Official Ranking List in this country might well be given a trial is clear from the interest taken by players of lawn tennis in various unofficial lists compiled from time to time by writers in the Lawn Tennis Press. If it were once made I feel quite sure that there would be an insistent demand for it to be continued annually. And, if the authorities should ever adopt the revolutionary principle involved in seeding the draw, an Official Ranking would be a practical necessity.

Another question which has for many years past been the subject of endless discussion is the abolition of Challenge Rounds in the Championships at Wimbledon.

Ever since the Championships began to be held it has been the custom that the winners of the Men's Singles, Ladies' Singles, and Men's Doubles Championships "stand out" of those competitions in the following year, only being called upon to defend their titles against the winners of the respective All-Comers' events. Hence the reigning Champion, himself fresh, meets in the Challenge Round a man who, if the opposition is strong, has been playing during the previous ten days some seven matches, most of which have probably, and some certainly, been extremely strenuous; a man, therefore, who must necessarily be suffering, to a greater or less extent according to his mental and physical constitution, from severe strain. When, therefore, the supreme test comes on in the Challenge Round, the man who has not been subjected to that strain would appear to have a considerable initial advantage over the man who has been so subjected; and this involves the possibility that the really better player may not become the Champion of the year because he is too worn out by his previous exertions to do himself justice. And if this should happen—I do not affirm that it ever actually has happened—it is obvious that the object of holding a Championship to determine the best player of the year has not, in fact, been achieved.

There is only one really strong argument in favour of retaining the custom of the Holder of a Championship "standing out"; and that is, that to compel him to play through is a break with a tradition that is coeval with the history of the Championships. Every consideration of fairness and equal treatment for all competitors is on the other side; but those who regard tradition as of no account ought to take into consideration that, while the tradition was being built up, the unfairness was, if not actually

non-existent, at any rate nothing like so striking as it has been in recent years. The total number of competitors in the first twenty years or so of the game was very small as compared with the present entry; consequently the number of matches which the winner of the All-Comers' Singles had to play was also much smaller, and he was not subjected to anything like the same strain, because he frequently had a day's rest between each of his matches; whereas, even though the present-day entry is limited to 128 players, he has to play seven matches with only two days, at most, of rest, and quite possibly several doubles and mixed doubles as well. The all-round class of his opponents was also, certainly, not so high; nor, the pace of the game being slower in those days, was the effort so great or the consequent strain so heavy.

It has also been argued that the "standing-out" Champion does not really get much advantage over his challenger, because he himself gets no singles match-play during the Championship meeting until he steps on to court for the Challenge Round itself, whereas the challenger is in full practice and has the prestige of his successive victories in the All-Comers' Singles to reinforce him. Personally, I do not think that this is a sound argument; and what the Champions have themselves thought of it may be gauged from the fact that only two of them, I believe, have ever offered to play through and forgo their right to stand out. These two were the late A. F. Wilding and the present Champion, W. T. Tilden. (I cannot help feeling glad, by the way, that the latter's offer to play through in 1921 was not accepted; for, if it had been, it is in the last degree improbable that he would now have been the holder of the Championship, for an operation which he was



obliged to undergo only a week or so before the meeting began left him so unfit that he would almost certainly have decided not to play at all.) Both these offers resulted in the Management Committee of the Championships taking steps, by means of a *plébiscite* of the principal players, to find out what the general wish was with regard to the question of the holder standing out or playing through. At the time of Wilding's offer the response to this inquiry was not sufficiently decisive to warrant any change being made; but last year there was a large majority in favour of the change, and it was decided that it should be carried into effect in the Championships of 1923. Further, letters were written to the holders of the Men's Singles, Ladies' Singles, and Men's Doubles, viz. W. T. Tilden, Mlle. Lenglen, and R. Lycett and Max Woosnam, asking them if they would consent to play through in the Championships of 1922. Affirmative replies were received in each case, Mlle. Lenglen's being qualified by the proviso that her state of health should permit of her doing so. The change, therefore, should come into being this year, and the Championships will (if it does, and in any case next year) come into line with the way in which all other Championships are conducted. For in no other country besides our own has the Challenge Round been in existence for many years past, if ever—in itself convincing testimony to the way in which other nations regard the question. The Americans, for example, abolished their Challenge Round after the 1911 Championship. Those who cannot help grieving over the disappearance of the peculiar excitement attaching to the Challenge Round will probably soon learn to extract every bit as much excitement out of the final round of the All-Comers' Singles. And it is only the man whose desire

to see tradition upheld at any cost outweighs his sense of fairness who will not be glad of the alteration.

It will also be fairer and better that all the Grass Court Championships of the World should be played for under the same conditions. Since these Championships were allotted by the International Federation to this country in perpetuity, to be played for at Wimbledon in conjunction with the old-established Championships, the winners of the remaining two events, the Ladies' Doubles Championship and the Mixed Doubles Championship, have not enjoyed the privilege of standing out, but have been obliged to play through in the following year if they wished to endeavour to retain their titles. The former Championships for these two events have never been played for at Wimbledon, but at the Buxton and Northern tournaments respectively — a curious example of the rather haphazard way in which the game has evolved itself in the country of its birth, owing to the lack of representative government in its earlier stages, and consequently of a ruling body with powers to allot the right of holding Championship tournaments. The Men's Singles Championship was instituted by the All England Club in 1877; the Men's Doubles by the Oxford University L.T. Club two years later (the Challenge Cups presented by that Club being soon after handed over to the All England Club as the then recognised ruling body of the game and the proper authority for conducting its Championships); the Ladies' Singles by the All England Club in 1884; the Ladies' Doubles by the Buxton tournament in 1885; and finally the Mixed Doubles Championship by the Northern tournament, held in alternate years at Liverpool and Manchester, in 1888. All these Championships, therefore, were started before the Lawn Tennis Association came

into existence! And all of them (except the Men's Doubles) have, since they were instituted, been held and managed by the club which started them, and not by the Association—a thing which, though understandable by Englishmen, must often, one would imagine, cause the intelligent foreigner, unfamiliar with our characteristic national processes, a measure of bewilderment.

That the Lawn Tennis Association does not, in fact, have any voice in the management of the Championships beyond allotting a date on which they are to be played to the Committee of Management, and nominating four members of the L.T.A. Council to serve on that committee, may seem almost as strange to the younger generation of home players as it must to the foreigner. But, until the last few years, the L.T.A. has never been at all a wealthy organisation, and certainly was not, at its foundation, in a position to inaugurate Championships of its own. Even if it had done so, they would certainly have failed to attract any interest comparable with the Championships managed by the All England Club, with the prestige which the passage of years had given to the latter. Besides, the All England Club had rendered invaluable service to the game in shouldering the burden of the Championships in lean years—and some of them were very lean years—as well as in fat years; and any interference with the Club's rights in and over the Championships, so gained, would have been widely resented by many players outside as well as inside the All England Club. The two bodies agree very well together on that understanding; and however anomalous the arrangement may seem, it has worked to the advantage of all those who have been competitors in the Championships. But with the much closer co-operation of the L.T.A. and the A.E.L.T.C. involved

in the acquisition and development of the "new Wimbledon," the L.T.A. will take, to the extent of instituting and managing the National Hard Court Championships, a somewhat larger share of control; and, considering the firm position in which the L.T.A. has now established itself, this is only as it should be.

But of all the questions which from time to time perturb the mind of lawn-tennis players the most vexed of all is, I should imagine, the "foot-fault rule" and the thorny problems which spring from it. In the earliest code of laws of which I have a copy (1882), the laws dealing with the foot-fault are numbered 7 and 9, and read, in conjunction, as follows: (*Rule 7*) "The Server shall stand with one foot beyond (*i. e.* further from the net than) the base-line, and with the other foot in or upon the base-line, and shall deliver the service. . . ." (*Rule 9*) "It is a fault if . . . the Server do not stand as directed in Law 7." As the game progressed, the laws enacting the way in which the service is to be delivered passed through several alterations until they reached their present form, as follows: (*Law 6*) "The Server shall before commencing to serve stand with both feet at rest on the ground behind (*i. e.* further from the net than) the base-line, and within the limits of the imaginary continuation of the centre mark and the side-lines, and thereafter the Server shall not run, walk, hop, or jump before the service has been delivered, but the Server may raise one foot from (and if desired, replace it on) the ground, provided that both feet are kept behind the base-line until the service has been delivered." (*Law 7*) ". . . the service shall be deemed to have been delivered at the moment of the impact of the racket and the ball." (*Law 9*) "The service is a fault if the Server commit any breach of Laws 6 or

7. . . .” For purposes of comparison I will quote the United States L.T.A. Rule on the same point. (*Rule 6*) “Before commencing to serve the Server shall stand with both feet at rest behind, *i. e.* farther from the net than the base-line, and within the limits of the center mark and side-line. From the time of taking such stand and until the racket strikes the ball, both feet shall remain behind the base-line, and at least one foot shall remain (continuously) on the ground.” (*Rule 8*) “It is a fault if the Server commit any breach of Rule 6. . . .”

It will be observed that our Law 6 and the American Rule 6, although not couched in identical terms, are, when read carefully, in effect the same. Our law specifically mentions running, walking, hopping, and jumping as illegal: the American rule provides for these illegalities in the implication of the words “from the time of taking such stand and until the racket strikes the ball, . . . at least one foot shall remain continuously on the ground.” It is on the whole a better wording of the intention, since it does away with the lack of conciseness involved in the reference in our Law 6 to “such time as the service has been delivered,” and the definition in the subsequent Law 7 of the meaning of this phrase.

Our foot-fault law is, of all the laws of lawn tennis, the one most frequently broken, both by good players and bad. It certainly offers ample scope for infraction. Bad players mostly break it by taking a running or walking start—by never, in fact, “standing” at all—or by putting one foot on or even over the base-line. (I have never, by the way, yet enjoyed the felicity of seeing a server “hop,” though possibly this form of illegality is not unknown.) Among good players the more frequent

breaches of the law take the form of either jumping, or "swinging over," *i. e.* allowing the foot which they have lifted from the ground to pass inside the base-line before they have hit the ball. They jump, in order to hit the ball from a greater height in the air than they could if one foot remained on the ground; they swing over in their haste to run in on their service.

The test of a well-drafted rule is, "Is it easy for the umpire to enforce it?" Now an umpire can see pretty well if a server is walking, running, jumping, or hopping when he serves, or if he is putting his foot on or inside the base-line, or even on the wrong side of the "imaginary continuation" of the centre-mark or side-line (though he cannot be really certain, in some cases, of the two latter infringements). But it is quite impossible for an umpire, sitting on his chair at the net, to be certain whether the "loose" foot of the server has or has not crossed the base-line before the ball has been struck. Even a linesman, actually looking along the line, cannot always be absolutely certain, because his eyes, being unfortunately placed horizontally instead of vertically in his head, are unable to watch both ball and foot at the same time. The linesman's task is rendered easier if he holds a card, edgewise, vertically, in front of his nose; but even then he cannot always be certain—he is bound to rely partially on the sound of the impact, and sight travels more quickly than sound.

It is one of the game's ironies that the good player who infringes the law by "swinging over," and thereby increases the advantage already possessed by the server, should be just the one who most frequently escapes the consequences of his breach of the law relating to foot-faults. But this is undoubtedly the case. I do not suggest that good players, or bad players, either, for that

matter, intentionally break the law, trusting to the practical impossibility of detection; as a matter of fact I am pretty sure that, in every variety of foot-fault, the breach of the law is unintentional in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. But umpires have often said to me, "What *am* I to do? I can't see whether So-and-so is swinging over or not. They say he foot-faults every time, but I can't be sure about it. Ought I to foot-fault him?" In such case I always direct his attention to a little-known but extremely important passage in the Recommendations Regarding Lawn Tennis Prize Meetings, which runs as follows: "An Umpire (or Line Umpire) should call a fault in every case where he is not satisfied that the service laws have been strictly observed." If this Recommendation does not mean that the umpire's duty is to call a fault unless he is quite certain that the service is *fair*, and not because he is not quite certain that it is *unfair*, it means nothing. In other words, it is the striker-out, and not the server, who ought to be given the benefit of any doubt in the umpire's mind. This Recommendation, if known and acted upon, would make the umpire's task simple. I cannot help thinking that it would be a great advantage to the game if it were transferred from the Recommendations (which, being only recommendations, may, presumably, and are, certainly, often disregarded) to the Regulations, and included in the list of Duties of the Umpire therein set forth. It might even be added as a note to the Laws relating to the Service. If this were done the umpire or linesman would have at any rate more authority behind him, if he wished to enforce the law. And it is really only in close conjunction with this Recommendation that the foot-fault law can possibly be administered by an umpire sitting at the net.

The majority of umpires have hitherto been reluctant to foot-fault players, partly from the doubt existing in their minds as to whether a server is swinging over or not, and their ignorance of the Recommendation quoted above; but their reluctance is no doubt also largely due to the attitude taken up by some of the leading players, who resent being foot-faulted. Only last summer, I heard a player who has represented this country in the Davis Cup exclaim, when he had been perfectly properly foot-faulted, "Fancy foot-faulting *me*—in a second-class tournament!"—a really striking example of mixed mentality. But with the coming into being of the Umpires' Association, it may be hoped that, with added authority, umpires will be much more active than they have been in the past in enforcing the law. When once umpires become sufficiently strong-minded in answer to the injured query, "What was I doing wrong?" to reply, "I am not sure whether you were swinging over or not. What you have got to do is to satisfy me that your service is fair. Go on," there will be very little subsequent foot-faulting, and the chief blot on the game as played to-day will rapidly be obliterated.





## **THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG WAY**



## . . CHAPTER XVI

### THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG WAY

*(Specially intended for girls and ladies beginning to play)*

THERE is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything.

This is just as true about games as it is about the more serious things of life; and it is as true about lawn tennis as it is about any other game.

I want to help my readers to play lawn tennis better than they do, and to enjoy their game more. The better you play any game the more you enjoy it; and if you want to play well you have got to learn what to do and what to avoid doing.

It is not so much a question of *style*, though that is, of course, important, too; but a question of how to make the strokes in the game in the way which will give the best results from them when they are made.

You may think, when you watch good players playing lawn tennis, that, judging from the difference in their styles, there is no particular way that can be called "the right way" of making a particular stroke. One player makes her drive in one way, another in another; both seem to get the same result. This is true; at the same time, though different players may appear to have different ways of making the same stroke, there are certain underlying principles which all of them, perhaps unconsciously, employ to get the proper result.

It is less easy to see, from watching, why a good player makes a good stroke than why a bad player makes a bad one. You do not take in all at once, that, for the good stroke to be made, the player must have her feet in the right position, her racket held rightly and in the right place, and the movement of her body and arm so entirely under control that the "timing" of the stroke is perfect. The "timing" of the stroke means that the ball is hit at exactly the right moment, not a second too soon or too late.

While you are still a beginner (and it is mainly for beginners that I am writing) you will not observe all these things, because you will not know what to look for. You will see the shot made well without knowing why. But if you see the shot made badly even an untrained eye will see that something looks wrong in the making of it, though perhaps exactly what is wrong may not at once be recognised. It is my object to show you how to recognise the reasons for good strokes and bad strokes made by a player whom you are watching, and to help you to make similar good strokes and avoid similar bad strokes yourself.

I hope to be able to do this by showing you, by means of some splendid photographs of Mrs. Larcombe—winner of the Ladies' Singles Championship at Wimbledon in 1912; of Doubles and Mixed Doubles Championships innumerable and the best of all lady volleyers—both the right and the wrong way of making most of the different strokes in the game.

### HOW TO HOLD YOUR RACKET

The very first thing to learn is the proper way to hold your racket. If you don't hold it in the right

way, you can't expect to get the right result. A racket is not a hockey stick or a golf club or a croquet mallet, neither is it a saucepan or a carpet-sweeper. Its handle is not round, but octagonal. It is made in that shape because that is the shape which fits most naturally and comfortably into the grip of the palm, fingers, and thumb. I do not say that there is only *one* "right way" of holding the racket; geniuses arise who obtain good effects with unorthodox grips. But they are exceptions; and so long as what I call the "right" grip is comfortable to you, and makes you feel that you have control over the racket, you had better give it a thorough trial before you discard it to make experiments of your own. As it is also the *natural* grip, it is more likely to suit you than any other.

Very well, then. Now look at the orthodox grip for the forehand shot—the commonest stroke in the game—as shown in 1.

Mrs. Larcombe takes the handle of the racket close to the handle end, and holds it so that the "V" between the thumb and first finger comes on the left or front edge of the straight piece down the side of the handle. The fingers are closed naturally round the handle, slanting slightly upwards, the little finger being about three-quarters of an inch above the leather support at the end of the handle. The inner side of the hand rests against this leather, which is put there for that purpose, and to prevent the racket flying out of the hand. Here you have the "right" grip.

There may be more than one "right" grip. There are, without any doubt, many wrong ones. It is almost incredible how those who are perhaps not accustomed to games will select the most difficult and uncomfortable ways of holding a racket in preference to the easiest

and most natural. To illustrate all these would be superfluous, if not impossible. One of the commonest is shown in 2. Here you will see that the back of the hand is almost underneath the racket, instead of behind it (where it is wanted to give power to the stroke). The thumb is on top of the handle instead of being locked down over it, while the fingers have very little real grip at all. With a racket held in this way, no player could hope to make any success of her stroke.

Now about the grips, right and wrong, for the backhand drive. If you want to be a good player, it is obvious that you will have to learn how to make backhand shots, however difficult you may find them, because it is your backhand that will always be attacked. And to make a difficult shot, it is more than ever important that the racket should be held in the right way. Nearly all good players are weaker on their backhand than on their forehand. All bad players certainly are, but largely because it is a less "natural" way of hitting the ball, and even more because they don't set about it in the right way.

There is no mystery about the grip for the backhand drive. It is just the same as for the forehand, except for two things. These are, first, that the whole grip is shifted about half an inch round towards the back of the handle; the back of the hand now being flat on that side of the handle where the "V" was before. And secondly, that the thumb is put *along the back of* the handle, to give support to it, instead of being round it. Look at 3. Here Mrs. Larcombe shows you the right way to hold the racket for the backhand drive. In 4—the wrong way, or to say the commonest of the wrong ways would be more accurate—you will see the

thumb is *down* the handle instead of along it, and the fingers have got a very inefficient hold of the handle. But the main thing I want you to notice in these two pictures is the position not only of the hand and fingers, but of the *wrist*, in relation to the handle. In 3 the wrist is altogether *above* the line of the handle, which is held out almost horizontally, almost parallel with the ground; in 4 the wrist is pushed forward *in front of* the line of the handle, which is pointing downwards. *The merest glance at these two pictures is enough to show you that there is power behind the shot which 3 is going to make; but that all that 4 is going to make is—a mess of it!*

In all the photographs of Mrs. Larcombe you will not fail to be struck by the evident strength in her wrist. Weakness of wrist is one of the main reasons why women find the backhand shots more difficult than men do. A weak wrist is certainly a big handicap; but fortunately, as girls have become more athletic and harder workers, it is not so almost universal as it was.

But if your wrists *are* weak why not strengthen them? Here is a good exercise. Stand upright, stretch your arm out full-length at right angles with your body. Clench your fist as tight as you can, knuckles at top, palm down. Then suddenly unclench your fist—*throw* it open—extending the fingers right out, and giving the hand a half-turn backwards at the same time, so that the palm now faces forward and up. Try this a dozen times every morning for a month, first with each hand separately, and then with both together. At the end of the month you will find you have got a very different pair of wrists from those you started with.



## FOOTWORK

Good footwork, though it often goes quite unrecognised, is quite as important as good stroke-making. Indeed, *good strokes are not likely to be made unless the feet are in the proper position for making them.*

Your feet are the means by which you move your body from one place to another. Lawn tennis is a game which demands a great deal of rapid movement and activity, and unless your feet are in the right position to move your body without hesitation, you are either thrown off your balance (which implies that you cannot get your weight properly into the stroke) or you get to the ball too late.

Now, when waiting for the return of the ball you should have your feet in the position which will help you to start most easily and quickly to the place where the ball will pitch. What you want is freedom of action; and to get it your feet should be well apart and at an angle to the net, and you should keep your heels just clear of the ground, putting your weight on the ball of the foot. This will give you a quick start.

But when you have reached the place where you are going to make the stroke, you should put your feet firmly on the ground almost parallel to the line of flight of the ball, the left foot being just a little forward. 5 shows you the "right" position for making the forehand drive. This position is one of the most important things for a beginner to learn, because, if you are going to get all the power you can into the shot, you will have to throw your weight forward from the right foot (on which it rests as you swing your racket back for the stroke) on to the left foot.

Unless you have your feet in the right position to

start with, this shifting of the weight will make you lose your balance. But if they *are* in the right position your weight will not only come forward naturally and without any loss of balance, but will give you a start forward for running towards the net if you have made such a good shot that you think you will have a good chance of a winning volley off your opponent's return of it.

Now look at 6—the “wrong way.” How are you going to throw your weight forward, with your feet in this position, without losing your balance? It can't be done! And if your weight is *not* thrown forward, there isn't going to be any power behind your shot, or any pace in it.

Yet this position—elbow tucked in, right foot forward, left foot back—is one in which you will see any number of beginners—and all of them wondering why they can't “hit the ball”! If there is one thing more than another that playing lawn tennis will teach you, it is that you can't possibly hit the ball, as it should be hit, from a “tucked up” position.

For the “right way” of placing the feet for the backhand drive look at 7. Here, since the weight this time has got to be shifted from the left foot to the right as you are making the stroke, the right foot is in front; and the balance of the body is poised so “easily” that you are just in the right position to step forward with your right foot, without any loss of balance, to a ball that pitches a little shorter than you expected, or backward with your left foot to one that pitches deep. Note, too, both in 5 and 7 the arm well away from the body, so that the swing and the follow-through may not be cramped in the least.

But in 8, as in 6, that left foot pushed forward is

bound to destroy any chance of a good stroke, because no transference of weight is possible without loss of balance.

*Do get it firmly into your head that the only way of getting power into your strokes is to get your weight behind them ; that the only way to get your weight behind them is to have your body properly balanced ; and that the only way to have your body properly balanced is to have your feet in the right position.*

All these things are obvious—they do not need deep thought—and yet players will apparently go on thinking that the position of the feet doesn't much matter. It matters almost more than anything else. If your footwork is just a little bit better than your opponent's, however equally you may be matched otherwise, it will be *quite* enough to turn the scale. Watch the footwork of good players carefully; it is well worth your while not to bother about looking at anything but the feet of a good player for a game or two at a time when you are watching a match she is playing in. You ought to learn a lot from it.

### THE FOREHAND DRIVE

As you will be called upon to play the forehand shot off the ground far more often than any other, you ought to learn the right way of making it before you go on to any other. It is, indeed, the foundation of the game; if you can't make a decent forehand drive you are not likely to get much opportunity of making any other strokes at all !

I have already dealt with the position in which the feet should be for the forehand drive, and the reasons for that position; so it is only necessary now to remind

you that they should be well apart, the left foot forward, and the right foot about on a line parallel to the line of the ball's flight.

The drive itself consists of three parts: the swing back, the hit, and the "follow through."

For the swing back your knees should be a little bent, your hand bent back, your wrist loose, your elbow kept a little down and well away from your side. Don't crowd in on the ball, or else you will cramp your shot. You ought to be standing about a yard to the left of the place where your racket is going to hit the ball; give yourself room to hit it freely. Before the ball bounces, begin your swing back; this will give you more time to aim at the ball, and prevent you from "snatching" at your stroke.

Watch the ball all the time, and as it rises from the ground swing your racket forward about waist-high, parallel with the ground. Hold your racket firmly, and have your wrist taut for the moment of impact. Swing forward freely, watching the ball right on to the face of your racket, so that you may be sure of hitting it with the middle of the face, which is the only part of the racket where the driving-power lies. When you hit it, don't check your forward swing; bring it right through as far as you can, straightening your arm out to its full length. Bring your shoulder well round, getting the weight of your body into the stroke by transferring it from the right foot to the left as the stroke is made.

This may seem a good deal of explanation of such an apparently simple matter as hitting a ball with a racket; but all these processes must be gone through before the shot is properly made. After you have become a little more proficient you will go through

them almost unconsciously; but while you are still a beginner you have got to think about them.

Look at the photograph of Mrs. Larcombe 9. It shows you the "Right Way"—the position in which you should be *at the moment the ball is struck*. Notice the position of the feet—you can almost *see* the weight coming forward from the right foot on to the left. Notice the freedom of the swing, the arm straightened out to follow through, without the slightest hesitation, directly the ball has been struck.

The "Wrong Way," or, rather, one of the innumerable wrong ways of making the forehand drive is shown in 10. In this photograph, Mrs. Larcombe has placed herself in an attitude in which nobody except the photographer has ever seen her, but one which will be instantly recognised by all as one of the most usual adopted by beginners.

It illustrates what may be called "The Shot off the Skirt," or "The Scoop Shot." The necessity for it is generally occasioned by the player not having anticipated at all the direction in which the ball would come to her, and, therefore, not having moved into a position to hit it properly. Generally, but not always. I have seen many and many a beginner jump—apparently with intention—into this position, as if under the impression that the ball can be better returned by "pushing" it off the legs or body than by standing to one side of it and hitting it as it comes past. In either case the result of the stroke is unlikely to be successful, unless from the difficulty experienced by the opponent in anticipating its direction, if it should be so fortunate as to cross the net at all. With the elbow tucked into the waist, the fore-arm pressed against the front of the hip, the racket gripped wrongly and held in the wrong

position, and the feet so placed as to prevent any weight at all being put into the shot, you cannot expect much of a result, can you? And even if you do, you won't get it. This is a really valuable photograph, it shows so many faults all in one picture. You couldn't have a better example of "how not to do it."

With "top-spin" or "lifting" drives, and "under-cut" or "chop" drives I do not intend to deal here at all. The plain forehand drive is the foundation-stroke of the game, and the beginner ought to become thoroughly proficient in that before going on to varieties of it which are much more difficult.

Perhaps the most important thing of all for you to remember, in making a forehand drive, is *not to be in too much of a hurry to hit the ball*. This is the beginner's commonest fault. The feeling that you "must be quick" about it is almost irresistible. But you must resist it; if you don't, the result will be that you will "snatch" at the ball, and will fail to time it properly. You will hit it before it comes up to you; and, if you do that, you will be hitting in front of the centre of your weight. This means loss of power and control. Don't be in a hurry, wait till the ball is nearly opposite your right foot, watch it on to your racket, then hit it in the middle of your swing, and follow through.

### THE BACKHAND DRIVE

To the beginner there is scarcely any stroke in the game which presents such difficulty and is accompanied by such a feeling of complete helplessness as the backhand stroke off the ground.

It is *not* an easy stroke, of course; but most people make it very much more difficult than it need be by not

taking the trouble to understand the proper way of making it. You will see players, for example, even trying to make an effective stroke with the same face of the racket as that which they use for the forehand drive, turning the hand round so that the palm is facing the net and the elbow is poked up into the air. How they expect to do any good with a stroke so made—a sort of a “push-shot”—is hard to see; but repeated and inevitable failure does not seem to cause them to reconstruct their method. Probably the reason for their having adopted it is because their wrist is weak; but as we have already seen, the wrist can be strengthened.

Another method, quite as ugly as the one I have mentioned, but not quite so evil, because at any rate the player is going to try to hit the ball with the proper face of the racket, is shown in 11. This is a very commonly observed example of the “wrong way.” The advanced left foot prevents the weight being thrown forward as the ball is hit; the tucked-in elbow prevents all freedom either of stroke or of follow-through; the back of the hand, being in front of and partly underneath the handle instead of on top of it, loses all power.

This sort of thing won't do at all; your own common-sense will tell you that. But even your own common-sense may find less difficulty in seeing what is wrong than in discovering what is right. But when you come to look at 12 you will, at any rate, see how the thing *should* be done. This picture (as 9 did in the case of the forehand drive) shows Mrs. Larcombe in the position she occupies for the backhand drive *at the moment the ball is struck*. Let us reconstruct the means by which you may obtain this position for yourself.

You must swing your body well round so that the right shoulder is towards the net. Your feet must be well apart, to give you a nice balance, and nearly in a line with the flight of the ball; and take great care to keep the left foot from getting forward. If it gets forward you won't be able to follow through. Your arm should be nearly straight, your elbow just a shade below the level of the spot where you are going to hit the ball, and your wrist loose, but, of course, *ready* to tighten up as the ~~stroke~~ comes to be made. This is all preliminary to the actual making of the shot. Now for the stroke itself.

Swing the racket back as far past the left shoulder as you can, and then swing it forward right through so that at the end of the stroke it finishes well away in front of the right shoulder. You must, of course, watch the ball right on to the racket, just as you did in the case of the forehand drive, and "time" your swing so as to hit the ball at the right moment. If you *do* time the ball properly, hit it properly, and are careful not to check the racket after hitting it, but to follow right through, your weight will have transferred itself from the left to the right foot at the end of the stroke—the shot will have been made in the "right way."

Beginners always say they feel so "cramped" over their swing for the backhand drive. So they are, in comparison with the swing for the forehand drive, because the arm has to swing across the body instead of free of it. You cannot get your shoulder behind the ball in the same way; but, if you will remember never to check the swing, but always to follow right through with it, you will be surprised to find how quickly the "cramped" feeling will disappear. It is what you do with your racket *after* the ball has been hit that gives



the feeling of freedom or of crampedness to the stroke.

But whatever the kind of drive, don't think of anything else but hitting the ball and hitting it in the direction you want to hit it. Don't think about winning the stroke, or what is going to happen afterwards; concentrate your whole attention on making that one particular stroke.

Merely *reading*, by the way, about the right and the wrong way of holding your racket, or of placing your feet, or of making the different strokes in the game, will not be of nearly so much use to you as if, directly you have read about them, you were to take a racket in your hand, and grip it, or make the stroke with it in the right way, as described and illustrated. If you can do this in front of a long glass, so much the better.

### GRIPS FOR VOLLEYING

I now come to the Grips for Volleying.

Volleying is becoming every year of more and more vital importance to the woman player, especially in playing doubles and mixed doubles. The woman who can volley well is a partner eagerly sought after in tournaments, and among club players she rapidly becomes a power. A little time ago I met a girl who had recently joined a club in North London, and asked her how she was getting on. "Topping!" she said. "I'm playing for the first team!" I knew that she wasn't much of a player, really; so I inquired how she had managed that. "Well, I'm the only one that volleys, you see," she replied. "You told me a little time ago that there was no future for a girl who can't volley, so I determined to try. And I can do it all right!"

"*I determined to try!*"—that's more than half the battle! Most women, even those who can play their ground strokes quite decently, regard the volley as a stroke which is far too difficult to attempt. The only time they ever do attempt it is when they are forced to—when it is the only possible way of hitting the ball—as a purely defensive stroke, in fact; whereas, as we shall see later on, the real *raison d'être* of the volley is that it is an *attacking* stroke. So I say to you, as I said to that girl: "There is no future for the girl who can't volley." You must learn to volley if you want to be any good at the game. And, as a matter of fact, the volley is, in one way, easier than the ground stroke, because you haven't got to consider what the ball will do after it has pitched.

But to volley at all—let alone volleying well—it is just as necessary that you should hold your racket in the right way as it is in the case of the ground strokes. And, of all volleyers, you could not possibly have a better example to follow than Mrs. Larcombe. Look, then, at the way she holds her racket for the forehand volley, 13. The actual "grip" of the handle does not differ from the grip used for the forehand drive, but the racket, instead of being held almost horizontally, is raised at an angle of about forty degrees. Take your racket, and hold it *firmly*, like this—the "right way." Then hold it as it is shown in 14—the "wrong way"; and you are bound to feel that there is no efficiency in the grip. Yet this is the way you will see nine women out of ten preparing to volley, with the head of the racket sagging downwards, and the fingers loose and separated instead of being close together.

Remember that you will never be able to volley unless you hold your racket *tight*; with a slack grip and slack

wrist you cannot possibly get either power or direction into the shot. The ball has got to be *hit*, not merely allowed to come up against the strings of the racket. When you come to look at 15—the “right way” for the backhand volleying grip, and 16—the “wrong way” for it, and to take the racket in your hand for the purpose of “feeling” them as well as merely seeing them, you will soon discover the same relative merits and faults as in the forehand volleying grips: the firm hold, with the racket pointed upwards, in the one; the racket sagging down and the inefficient grip (though this is not so obvious in 16 as in 14, because you only see the back of the hand, and not the fingers), in the other.

The reason why the head of the racket should be pointed upwards, and not allowed to sag down, is because this action of tilting the head stiffens the wrist in exactly the right way for making volleys. The wrist *must* be tense, and this is the best way of making it so. Even for low volleys (*i. e.* those played from below the level of the top of the net) the head of the racket must be kept up, and the whole body and arm stooped down to the ball.

In the “wrong way,” with the head sagging and the wrist loose, you have no power, and you will probably hit the ball up in the air, which is worse than useless.

### VOLLEYING

Before I go on to explain *how* the volley should be made, it will be just as well to say what the volley is, and *why* it should be made.

The volley is a stroke made by hitting the ball before

it has struck the ground. It may be made overhead, shoulder-high, elbow-high, or below the level of the net.

The *object* of the volley is *not* simply to return the ball; the volley is, or should be, an *attacking stroke*, with the intention either of winning the point outright, or of directing the ball to a part of the court from which, even if your opponent can return it, she can only return it so weakly that you will be able to win the point outright by another volley. The *finishing* of the rally should always be the thing foremost in your mind when you are volleying.

But volleying, to be successful, has to be done *near the net*. The right position for you to be in is between the net and twelve feet back from it. The nearer the net you are, the better. It is unlikely that volleying from between the service-line and the base-line will ever give you good results.

There is one thing which no beginner realises—and a great many players who are by no means novices don't either—about making a volley; and that is, the very important particular in which it differs from a stroke off the ground. In making strokes off the ground you have to swing at them, in order to put pace on the ball. But in nearly all cases when a ball is volleyed the pace is on it already, and it is only the *direction* of it that you want to alter. Therefore, paradoxical as it may seem, *keep your racket still—don't swing—before volleying*. Your control of the direction is most accurate with a firm racket, so keep the head of the racket up, because this (as I pointed out when dealing with the grips for volleying), stiffens the wrist in just the right way to get this firmness.

The idea of “changing the direction” of the ball is

all important in volleying; because it is the direction in which you hit the ball that counts. It is no good to hit it straight back to your opponent (unless, indeed, you are in a position to smash it hard at her feet), *it must be placed*.

And now you will see the advantage of being close up to the net when you volley. When you are close up to the net, you have got a great deal more of your opponent's court open for you to put the ball into than when you are at the back of the court, and therefore don't forget that it is actually easier to place a volley than a ground stroke. Having this opportunity then, use it. Volley *across* court rather than down it, so as to drive your opponent right out of position, if you are not further back than seven or eight feet from the net; if you are further back than this, the cross-volley becomes more difficult; and in that case, if you daren't risk it, and volley down the middle of the court instead, be sure to volley *deep*—that is to say, put the ball far back in the court, as near your opponent's base-line as you can.

In 17 Mrs. Larcombe shows you the "right way" for the forehand volley at the moment when the stroke is made. The ball is hit *firmly*, the wrist and forearm doing all the work, without swing, and bringing the racket right through after the ball is hit, so that when the stroke is finished the head of the racket is pointing in the direction in which you have aimed the shot. 19, similarly, shows you the "right way" for the backhand volley at the moment of impact. And, just to encourage you, I may say that the backhand volley is far simpler and easier to make than the backhand ground-stroke, just because no swing is required.

Notice that in both of these "right way" pictures the head is bent a little forward so as to enable you to

look along the line of flight of the ball. This helps you to "time" it better. Compare these two pictures carefully with 18, the "wrong way" of the forehand volley and 20, the "wrong way" of the backhand volley, respectively; not only with regard to the position of the racket, the elbow, the arm and the hand, but also—and especially—to that of the feet. 20 is an almost perfect compendium of "how not to do it" in the case of a backhand volley.

All the volleys that we have just been talking about are those which come from waist to shoulder high, the easy ones. Now we will consider those which have to be played from below the level of the net.

### THE LOW VOLLEY

In dealing with the ordinary forehand and backhand volleys, and the reason for making them, I have tried to make it clear that the volley ought to be an *attacking* stroke; and that it should be played from a position as near the net as possible, because, the nearer the net you are, the more room there is in your opponent's court into which you can volley the ball.

All the volleys I was then talking about were volleys played from a point higher than the level of the top of the net, and consequently the ball was, as it ought to be, volleyed *downwards*. But unfortunately you will not always be in a position to volley downwards, because sometimes, though you may be near the net, the ball, when it reaches you, will already be at a point below the level of the top of the net.

You will often hear people say that the low volley—the volley made when the ball is below the level of the top of the net when you hit it—is merely a defensive

stroke. They will even go as far as to say that you ought not to volley at all unless you can hit the ball downwards. But, apart from the fact that very often the low volley is the only possible way of hitting the ball at all, it is quite easy to make too much of a fetish of the volley being an attacking stroke *only* when and if it is hit downwards.

The low volley *is*, theoretically, a defensive stroke; but a good volleyer will often be able to turn it into an attacking one. Naturally, it isn't so easy as the shoulder-high volley, because, since you are unable to hit it downwards, you have to take great care not to hit it upwards in such a way that your opponent will get an easy smash off your return.

The time when your low volley is most likely to be actually a point-winning stroke is when you are quite close up to the net on one side of the court, and you can "turn" the ball across the court almost parallel with the net. A low backhand cross-volley played in this way is about as awkward a shot as possible for your opponent to deal with. She has been able, we will say, to get well up to the net so as to kill your return, but finds the ball coming right across her instead of towards her, if you play the shot in the right way, so that it becomes extremely difficult for her to hit it at all, and unless she hits it exactly right, she will only hit it into the net.

The great thing to remember, in playing low volleys, is that you must *bend well down* to them, keeping the head of the racket slightly raised. Look at 21 and 23—the "Right Way" of playing the forehand and backhand low volleys respectively. Note the left foot well forward for the forehand, and the right foot well forward for the backhand low volley, to give the proper

balance to the body; and in each case the head of the racket raised a little above the horizontal, so as to give the right amount of firmness to the grip. Now look at 22 and 24—the “Wrong Way.” At the very best only scooping the ball up into the air, to give an easy chance of a kill to your opponent, can result from shots played when you are in positions like these; it is quite certain that no power can come from them, because no follow-through is possible, owing to there being no body balance. Both these shots are being played (a) off the wrong leg—bad footwork; (b) with the body not nearly enough bent down—bad balance; (c) with the racket sagging downwards, almost touching the ground—bad grip. No wonder that players who employ methods like these regard volleying as a very difficult affair!

You will find it interesting and instructive to compare these four photographs of the right and the wrong way of the low volley with the four of the right and the wrong way of the ordinary volley—the waist-high and shoulder-high volleys. On doing so, you may think that the positions for the ordinary volley and for the low volley are different, especially with respect to the position of the feet. But this is not so, in fact. The positions are really the same, *allowing for the bend of the body*.

The volleys are played in the same way; the grip is the same; the action is the same; but, owing to the stoop of the body necessary to get down to the ball, the *front* foot in each case is thrown a little more forward to take the “forward” weight of the body. Apart from tennis, you can see the reason of this for yourself by a very simple experiment. Put a small article down on the floor about a yard in front of you. Now stoop to pick it up. You will find that, instinctively, you



move one foot forward to take the weight of your body and to prevent you from toppling over.

There is still one kind of volley left to consider, and that is the Smash.

### THE SMASH

The "smash" is an exhilarating subject. Just as in golf nine people out of ten will say that, for pure pleasure, there is nothing in the game to equal a clean-hit drive from the tee, so in lawn tennis fully the same proportion will admit that they get more satisfaction out of a decisive smash than out of any other shot. I suppose that what makes both shots respectively so pleasurable is that they are "full-power" strokes. And they have this also in common, that perfect timing is the essence of both of them.

A smash is a volley which is *intended to win the point outright purely by pace*, without taking into account whether your opponent can get to it or not. You hit the ball, in fact, as hard as ever you can, because the harder you hit it, the greater its speed. It is no good at all to try to smash unless you *do* hit the ball as hard as you can; otherwise the stroke is merely an overhead volley, and—you have missed an opportunity. You must keep this in mind, for though lots of good women players can, and do, hit very hard off the ground, few of them seem to dare to "let themselves go all out" at a smash, and consequently you don't often see a woman bring off a real "smash." But there is no earthly reason why they shouldn't, if they would only harden their hearts to it, and learn the right way to do it.

The *time to smash* is when you are not more than twelve feet back from the net, and when your opponent

is obliging enough to send you a short lob—that is, a ball which she has intended to hit high over your head to the back of your court, and consequently force you to run away from the net to take it; but, in this case, intention has outrun performance.

The *way to smash* is this: As the ball that you are going to smash has been hit high in the air, it will be falling nearly straight down. You must stand *right under the ball as it drops*. This is important, because if you stand where the ball, if it fell to the ground, would drop *in front* of you, when you hit at it you are pretty sure to get too much over it, and hit it down into the net. Stand, then, right underneath it, and a little sideways to it, not directly facing the net; swing your racket well back over your shoulder, and bring it forward again *fast*, hitting the ball as hard as you can with the plain face of the racket, and with full body-swing and follow-through. Remembering that it is the *speed* of the smash, not its direction, that makes it effective, aim your shot more to the middle of her court than to the side.

If you will look at 25 you will see very well the right way of the beginning of the Forehand Smash. Notice how Mrs. Larcombe is watching the ball dropping (straight down over her head, *not* in front of her); how the racket is just ready to be swung forward so as to hit the ball when it (the racket) is travelling its fastest; how well the position of the left arm helps to balance, and how the left foot is nicely forward to receive the weight of the body as the shot is made and the follow-through brings the weight forward.

But what a different tale 26 tells! If there were such a shot as a "Push-Smash" this would illustrate it, but the smash has no element of "push" about it at

all. Observe the right foot forward—nothing to receive the weight of the body; the racket held in front of the body instead of being swung up behind the shoulder; no possibility of the ball being hit hard, which is the essence of the smash. What results from an attitude like this is that the ball hits the racket instead of the racket hitting the ball, and no smash ever was or ever will be made when the ball is allowed to be the active party to the stroke. 27 and 28 show you the right and the wrong way of playing the Backhand Smash, and illustrate the same merits and defects, respectively, as 25 and 26.

Remember, if you want to taste the delights of the smash, you must make up your mind to hit the ball hard. You may be afraid of missing it altogether if you hit as hard as you can at it. Very well—miss it, then, but try again next time you have a chance. A time will come when you'll really hit it, and after that the times of missing, or mis-hitting, will grow fewer and fewer. To sum up: (1) Stand right under the ball; (2) Swing well back; (3) Bring your racket forward *fast*; (4) Hit the ball *hard*.

### SERVICE

In the early days of lawn tennis it was an almost unheard-of thing that a woman should serve overhand. Nowadays the majority of good women players serve overhand, because it has become recognised that the service is a powerful weapon of attack, and not merely a means of getting the ball into play. By hitting the ball *downwards from a height*, which is what you do if you serve overhand, you get much more power and pace into the first stroke of the game than you can by serving underhand.

Remember that you are beginning the attack with your service, and that that attack will soon become familiar to your opponent and easy for her to deal with if your service, whether under- or over-hand, always comes to her at about the same pace, and pitches in about the same place in her service-court.

Your aim should be to *vary* it, and keep on varying it. If you use an overhand service you can, with a little practice, vary the pace of it considerably without apparently altering your action; this is not so easy with an underhand service. But pace, though important, is not so important as the *placing* of your service. And the general principles of placing it to the best advantage are that you should *make the ball pitch as far back in your opponent's court as you can and as near the centre-line or the side-lines as possible*—far back, so as to prevent your opponent making an easy winning shot off a service that bounces high, near the net, when she will have all your court open to her; to one side or other of her court so as to drive her out of position. Generally speaking, the service to the side-line is the more useful, as to take a service directed diagonally across the court she will have to go to the very edge of the court, or outside it, to return the ball, and so leave her court open for your next stroke.

The service down the centre-line is most useful as a variation. If you have been serving mostly to the side-lines, especially when your opponent is in her right-hand court, a service down the centre-line will be very likely to take her unawares, and in any case she will have a backhand shot to play. To serve to the side-line you will get the best results by standing, to serve, at the outside corner of your base-line, because the diagonal angle is greater from there than if you serve

from the middle of the base-line. Conversely, for the service to the centre-line—"down the middle"—you should stand in the middle of your own base-line.

The way to make the ordinary plain overhand service is as follows. Stand loose and easy, a little sideways to the net, and take care that *both* your feet are behind the base-line. Swing the racket backwards and up over your shoulder, with the elbow bent and the wrist loose. Throw the ball up with your left hand, just a little to the right of the head. As it begins to fall again, bring your racket forward, hit the ball as high up in the air as you can, and "time" your shot so that, at the moment the ball is hit, your elbow is straight and your arm stretched right out. Look at the ball all the time, from the moment you have thrown it up until you have hit it. When you have hit it don't check the swing of your racket at all, but follow right through with arm and racket, and let the shoulder work freely all through the stroke. The racket should be in front of your left knee when the stroke is ended. 29 shows you Mrs. Larcombe at the moment the ball is beginning to fall, just about to bring forward her racket to hit it. Note the position of the left foot, well forward, so as to receive the weight of the body coming on to it as the service is made.

The Wrong Way is well shown in 30, which will be easily recognised by beginners. It is possible that the ball may be sent over the net by a player standing in this position, but it is much more likely that it will only be pushed *into* the net, or even short of it.

The only stroke that can be made with this action is a push, not a hit; and if you cannot *hit* your overhand service it is not going to be of any use to you. The feet, being side by side, prevent any weight being put into

the stroke; the elbow tucked in close to the side prohibits any swing at all. You cannot do more than "peck" at the ball; even if it goes over the net it can only go over slowly.

#### OTHER VARIETIES OF SERVICE

Before I go on to the later developments of the plain Overhand Service I want to say a few words on behalf of the Underhand Service; because for more than one reason, the Underhand Service is not to be despised or dismissed as "out-of-date."

In days past, when the Underhand Service was employed by nearly all women, to be able to serve overhand was considered a tremendous asset. In the future, when nearly all women will probably serve overhand, I think it quite likely that a good Underhand Service will, from its very unusualness, often prove extremely useful. Especially when the courts are slow; for the Underhand Service is almost bound to have some "cut" on it, and on slow courts this cut will make the ball keep very low after it pitches, and therefore be disconcerting to players who are accustomed to having the ball "come well up" to them, as it does off an Overhand Service.

Besides keeping low, the Underhand Service has another advantage over the overhand variety. *It is much less tiring*; and in a long match, to be less tired than your opponent when the pinch comes in the final set is no small gain. Lastly, if you should be unlucky enough to get an attack of "tennis elbow," you may still be able to use an Underhand Service when any other would be impossibly painful.

Mrs. Larcombe herself always uses an Underhand

Service on grass; and, coming from her racket, it is not nearly so innocent as it looks in comparison with the more showy overhand. It might seem that so simple a stroke needed no explanation; but it is easy to make the simplest stroke badly. The right way to make it is shown in 31.

Stand a little sideways to the net, resting your weight mainly on the right foot, and keeping the left foot forward so as to be ready to receive the weight as it is transferred in making the stroke. Swing the racket well back, with the arm quite "free" from the body, and then bring it forward again, "timing" it so as to hit the ball, dropped from the left hand, when it is a little over two feet from the ground. Just as you hit the ball, bring your right hand smartly to the left, turning it *under* the ball, almost, so that your palm is upwards. This action, if properly done with the wrist, will make the ball keep low when it pitches; and, as it will have a good deal of "cut" on it, too, your opponent will not find it very easy to deal with. And don't forget to "follow through" after you have hit it.

The beginner's way of doing it is, too often, as we see in 32. In fact, our old friend the "push" or "peck" shot again! The arm held tightly against the body—no swing, and therefore no speed. The ball almost *placed* on the racket, instead of being dropped, and swung at—no possibility of doing anything except scoop it gently up into the air. The right foot forward—no chance of following through or transferring the weight without falling forward. It is odds against the ball even getting as far as the net: yet this is the position four beginners out of five will deliberately choose for the first stroke of the game—the *only* stroke when the ball is entirely under their own control, and they can

do what they like with it. You won't *ever* do this again, will you?

Besides the Underhand and the plain Overhand Services, there is the more modern development of the latter, known as the American Service. I can't leave this unmentioned; but I warn you it is no stroke for a beginner. But, since few beginners are content to begin at the beginning, but want to "do it all" at once, there is no harm in your trying it, if you feel you must. You *may* be the one in a thousand who gets the knack of it straight away; if you are, and are also *strong and tall*, it will give you a big advantage over any player you are likely to meet before you begin to play in tournaments. You *must* be strong physically, because the American Service takes a great deal out of you.

This is how it is done. Stand easy, all muscles loose. Bend backwards, and leftwards, letting the left foot carry the weight. Bend your head to the left, and throw the ball up a little to the left of the head. Don't hold your racket too tight as you swing it back as far as it will go, but tighten your grip as you bring it up again, and *hit the ball, hard, a glancing blow, a little upward, from right to left.*

The result of bending the body backwards and hitting the glancing blow will be to put a lot of "over-spin" on the ball, which will cause it, when it pitches, to come off the ground very fast, and to "kick" outwards instead of going straight on—a combination of antics which makes it very difficult to deal with.

But neither description nor illustration of the American Service can possibly give you much idea of how to do it. You must go and see it done. This you can do at any tournament; it is a favourite service with many who mistakenly think that service is every-



thing, and don't in the least mind losing a game in which they have "got one 'peach' in"!

### THE RETURN OF THE SERVICE

In the games when you are not serving yourself, the first thing to be done is to 'return your opponent's service—over the net and into the court. When waiting to return the service you should stand easily, in the position shown in 33, with the racket balanced lightly in both hands and the feet well apart, so as to give you an easy start to run forward, or to either side—or even to step backwards if necessary. Your eyes should watch your opponent's eyes until she has hit the ball, and then watch the ball. It is a good thing to watch your opponent's eyes, because she will, in most cases, instinctively look towards the place she intends to hit the ball to, and this will help you to anticipate the direction of her stroke.

This photograph—"Waiting to receive; the right way"—does not necessarily mean that Mrs. Larcombe is waiting to receive the *service*; it is the proper position to adopt when awaiting any return of the ball. The wrong way is shown in 34. It is wrong, chiefly, because it is a *tiring* position, owing to the racket being held out and away from the body, instead of resting in both hands; but the whole attitude of the hand and arm is cramped. You would have almost to wrench yourself out of it to start moving to your stroke. Anything that tires you unnecessarily is bad. "Save" yourself all you can; a hard game is quite tiring enough in itself.

Now the Return of the Service is a very important stroke, because unless you *do* return it you have lost the ace without a fight for it. And if you are not in

the right place to receive the service, you will find it very hard to return it. The right place depends on what sort of service is being sent to you.

If the court is fast, and your opponent is using a hard-hit overhand service, you must be well back—behind your base-line, in fact—if you are going to have any chance of returning it well. Never forget that *it is far easier to run in than to run back*. Nor that a stroke made when you are running forward will have the weight of your impetus behind it; whereas one made when you are running backwards won't have any weight behind it at all.

If the court is slow, or the service not very hard, you needn't stand quite so far back; but don't come in too much, or else your stroke may be cramped at the last moment.

The *placing* of the return is very important; but don't be in too much of a hurry to win the ace right away with it. Try to place it so that you will make the next stroke difficult for your opponent. If she is staying on her base-line after serving, which will be the case unless she is a keen volleyer, there is no need to worry about your return being volleyed and killed, even if it is a weak one. But you can't "pass" a base-liner, so you should try to drive to one of the corners of her base-line, so as to get her out of position, and so obtain a wide-open court for your next shot.

If, however, she *is* "coming in" on her service you must avoid "putting the ball on to her racket." In other words, you must try to "pass" her, which you may do by a drive down her side-line, *or* across the court in front of her as she comes in, *or* to her feet if she is slow in getting to the net; *or* you can force her back by a lob.

The shot down the side-line is the easiest when you are in the right-hand court; you have the whole length of the court to drive into, so you can hit hard. From the left-hand court the cross-court return generally comes easiest.

But, just as I told you to vary your service, so I advise you to vary your return of the service. If you keep on playing the same shot time after time, your opponent will realise what you are going to do so well that she will always be ready and in the right place to deal with it. Moreover, she will be able to leave a lot of her court unguarded, because she knows you never aim there. Mix your returns up well; and keep her guessing all the time.

There's only one other thing that you need keep, and that's your temper. Perhaps that is the most important thing of all. Whatever may be the Right Way to set about playing lawn tennis, or any other game, losing your temper is most certainly the Wrong Way.

## INDEX



## INDEX

- ADVICE to novices ~~at~~ tournaments, 133  
 All England Club, 201  
 All England Croquet Club and lawn tennis, 199  
 Allen Brothers, 106, 107  
 Allen, E. R., 41  
 Alonso, M., 13  
 Angular shots and doubles play, 60  
 Armstrong, Mrs., 119
- B**
- Backhand drive, grips for the, 236, 243  
 Backhand smash, the, 256  
 Barrett, Roper, 21, 80, 85, 91, 105, 109  
 Beamish, A. E., 73  
 Beamish, Mrs., 119  
 Berscy, W. C., 141  
 Bisque system, the, 173  
 Blackmore, S. P., 15  
 Bourke, H. L., 15  
 Braun, C. E. von, 38  
 Brookes, Norman, 87, 91, 110
- Campbell, Hon. C., 73  
 Challenge rounds at Wimbledon, 219  
 Chambers, Mrs. Lambert, 119  
 Clothier, W. J., 219  
 Collins, W. H., table of differential odds drawn up by, 177, 179, 182
- Courts—  
   Grass and hard, 9  
   Of early days, 126  
 Covell, Mrs., 118  
 Crawley, A. E., 15
- D**
- Davis Cup—  
   Brothers Doherty and, 16  
   Foreign competitors for, 17  
   Institution of, 16  
 Davis, Dwight, donor of the Davis Cup, 16  
 Decugis, M., 91, 111  
 Dixon, C. P., 60  
 Doherty Brothers, 108  
 Doherty, R. F., 41  
 Doubles, 91 *et seq.*  
   Angular shots in, 60  
   Formation, 94, 109  
   Foundations for good pairing, 108  
   Manner of playing, 94  
   Modern doubles play, 94  
   Some famous pairs, 91  
   Team work secret of success, 92  
 Doust, S. N., 15, 22, 43, 49, 53;  
   on volleying, 57-61; 71, 80, 104, 105, 112, 113
- Drives—  
   Backhand, 40  
   Forehand, 33; how to make, 35  
   Horizontal, 36, 37  
   " Irish," 33, 36  
   Lifting, 37  
   Top-spin, 37  
 Driving, 34 *et seq.*  
 Dunlop, A. W., 91, 110

## E

- Eastbourne tournament, the, 132  
 Eveleigh, B. C., 14; a great referee,  
 141, 175, 180, 186

## F

- Fisher, F. M. B., 58; and the  
 Reverse American service, 72,  
 112  
 Foot-fault, 226  
 Footwork, 238  
 Forehand drive, the, 240

## G

- Garland, C. S., 91, 111  
 Geen, Mrs., 119  
 Gobert, A. H., 21, 22, 91, 120  
 Gore, A. W., 8, 33, 36, 91, 109  
 Government of the game, the, 199  
*et seq.*  
 Grips, 27, 58, 243  
 For backhand drive, 236  
 For volleying, 246  
 Groser, W. P., 14  
 Ground strokes—  
 Backhand drive, 33, 40  
 Chop shot, 38  
 Forehand drive, 33; how to make,  
 35  
 Horizontal drive, 39

## H

- Hamilton, W. J., 14; and the  
 "Irish" drive, 33, 36  
 Handicap register, importance of,  
 187  
 Handicapper, difficulties of, 188  
 Handicapping—  
 Bisque system, the, 173  
 Difficulties of, 171  
 Hundred-up system, the, 178  
 Owed odds and, 180  
 Pastime system, the, 178  
 Quarters system, the, 173, 175  
 Sixths system, the, 175, 176  
 Table of differential odds, the,  
 177  
 Three essentials for, 186

- Harvey, Miss E., 118  
 Hillyard, G. W., 200  
 Holiday tournaments, 132  
 Holman, Miss, 119  
 How to conduct tournaments, 156

- Ikley tournament, 141  
 Ingram, W. A., 112  
 International Championship, insti-  
 tution of, 16  
 International Lawn Tennis Federa-  
 tion, the, 202  
 "Invitation" tournaments, 165

- Jackson, N. L., 15; introduces the  
 Pastime or 100-up system of  
 handicapping, 178  
 Johnston, W. M., 34, 36, 87, 91,  
 103, 110, 111, 215

## K

- Kingscote, A. R. F., 80, 91, 103, 111  
 Kleinschroth, H., 91, 111

- Lamplough, Mrs., 117  
 Larcombe, D. R., 141, 184  
 Larcombe, Mrs., 42, 50, 117, 118,  
 234, 235, 242, 244, 247, 250,  
 255, 258, 259, 262  
 Lawford, H. F., 33  
 Lawn tennis—  
 A physical exercise, 7  
 England, the home of the game,  
 4  
 Park players, 11, 12  
 Popularity of, 6, 12, 128  
 Press, the, and, 14  
 Universality of, 3 *et seq.*  
 Veterans' championship, the, 8

Lawn Tennis Association, 128, 200  
 Laws of lawn tennis issued by, 201  
 Management of, 202  
 Lawn tennis, first rules for, drawn up by Marylebone Cricket Club, 199  
*Lawn Tennis*, official organ of the game, 16  
 Lawn Tennis Umpires' Association, 205  
 Laws of lawn tennis drawn up by All England Croquet Club, 200  
 Lenglen, Mlle., 117, 118, 222  
 Low volley, the, 251  
 Lowe, A. H., 38; and the reverse twist service, 72  
 Lowe, F. G., 41  
 Lycett, R., 52, 53, 73, 91, 104, 111, 118, 222

## M

Macdonald, H. R., 15  
 McKane, the Misses, 118  
 McLoughlin, M. E., 80  
 McNair, Mrs., 117  
 Mallory, Mrs., 119  
 Maples, A. S., 141  
 Marriott, C., 141, 184  
 Marylebone Cricket Club draw up first rules of lawn tennis, 199  
 Mavrogordato, T. M., 15, 21, 119  
 Men's Singles Championship, Wimbledon, 1921, cosmopolitan character of the last sixteen competitors, 4  
 Misu, N., and his variety of services, 72  
 Mixed Doubles, 117 *et seq.*  
 Parallel formation, 118  
 Morton, Miss, 119  
 Myers, A. Wallis, 14

## N

National Lawn Tennis Association, the, formation of, 200

Norton, B. I. C., 37, 41, 49, 50, 73  
 Novices at tournaments, advice to, 183

Owed odds cause of bad handicapping, 180; B. C. Eveleigh and, *ibid.*

Park lawn tennis players, 11; field for "missionary" enterprise among, 12  
 Parke, J. C., 80, 91, 103, 111, 118, 215  
 Parton, Mrs., 119  
 "Pastime" system of handicapping, 178  
 Patterson, G. L., 34, 91, 110, 118  
 Peacock, Mrs., 118  
 Pflaum, C., 141  
 Pim, J., 33, 87, 91, 109  
 Pockley, Dr. E. O., 94  
 Powell, K., 106  
 Powell, R. B., 106  
 Press, the, and lawn tennis, 14  
 Price, Hamilton, 15, 141, 184  
 Prince's cricket ground, lawn tennis first played at, 199  
 Public Parks Association, 205  
 Public Schools' Tournament, 1921, boys and the, 5

## R

Racket, methods of holding, 22; "orthodox" grips of, 27; 234  
 Rahe, F. W., 91, 111  
 Ranking of players, U.S.A., 217; French, 218  
 Referee, powers of, 154  
 Requisites for, 156  
 "Regulations for the Management of Lawn Tennis Prize Meetings" first published, 201



Renshaw, E., 91, 108  
 Renshaw, W., 91, 108  
 Return of the service, the, 262  
 Right and the wrong way to play,  
   the, 233 *et seq.*  
 Riseley, F. L., 91, 109  
 Ryan, Miss, 49, 117

Satterthwaite, Mrs., 119  
 Scrivener, H. S., 15, 141, 177, 184,  
   200  
 "Seeding" the draw, 212 *et seq.*  
 Service—  
   American, 69, 70, 261  
   Attributes of a first class, 65  
   Down the middle, the, 68  
   Express, 66  
   Freak, 72  
   Importance of varying, 67  
   Plain overhead, 68  
   Reverse American, 71  
   Reverse twist, 72  
   Super, 79  
   Twist, 71  
   Underhand, 259  
   Varieties of, 259  
 Shepherd, Miss D. C., 118  
 Simond, G. M., 141  
 Singles, 77 *et seq.*  
 Smash, the, 254  
 Smith, S. H., 33, 36, 91, 109  
 Some vexed questions, 211 *et seq.*  
 Sterry, Mrs., 117  
 Stoker, F. O., 91, 109  
 Story, E. U., 141, 184  
 Style, 21  
 Sydney Lawn Tennis Club, the, 57

## T

Table of differential odds drawn up  
   by W. H. Collins, 177; adopted  
   by Lawn Tennis Association,  
   178; 185  
 Thomas, R. V., 110  
 Tilden, W. T., 21, 22, 34, 91, 103,  
   110, 111, 119, 215, 221, 222

Tournament management, 137 *et seq.*  
 Tournaments, 125 *et seq.*  
   Committee, duties of, 140  
   Eastbourne, 132  
   Grass-court, 130  
   How to conduct, 156  
   Improvements in conditions of,  
     127  
   In U.S.A., 212  
   Management of, 137 *et seq.*  
   Novices at, advice to, 133  
   Order of play, 161; advantages  
     and disadvantages of, 163  
   Plan for running, 153  
   Prizes, 129  
   Referee, 141  
   Referee's tent, requisites for, 156  
   Secretary, duties of, 138  
   Treasurer, duties of, 140  
   Wimbledon Fortnight, the, 131  
 Tuckey, Mrs., 117

## U

U.S.A. Lawn Tennis Association,  
   212

Veterans' Championship, the, 8  
 Vexed questions, some, 211 *et seq.*  
 Volley—  
   Angle, 59  
   Cross-court, 57  
   Drag shot, 100  
   Lob, 51, 101, 106  
   Low, 50, 251  
   Position for making, 48  
   Short lob, 53  
   Smash, 52, 105  
   Stop, 51  
 Volley and the smash, the, 47 *et seq.*  
 Volleying, 57 *et seq.*, 248  
   Grips for, 246

Wahgunyah Club, Sydney, the, 57  
 Ward, H., 91, 111

## INDEX

271

- Watt, G. T. C., 53  
White, E. E., 15  
White, W. A., 15  
Wilding, A. F., 34, 38, 80, 91, 110, 221  
Williams, R. N., 80, 91, 111  
Wimbledon, challenge rounds at, 219  
Wimbledon tournament, the, 131  
Wood, Pat O'Hara, 110  
Woosnam, Max, 91, 111, 165, 222  
Wright, Beals, 91, 111